



AROUND THE ROCK

Town Council Winter Retreat Edition

This newsletter edition will highlight a few major proposed projects for Blowing Rock from the 2023 Annual Winter Retreat, which was held January 30th to February 1st. Below is a list of each day's topic discussion and you can watch the each day of the Retreat in its entirety on our YouTube channel: @blowingrockgov.

Day 1:

2022 Retreat Review and Projects Update, 2022-23 FY Mid-Year Finance Update, Debt & Bond Update, Fund Balance Update, 2023 Comprehensive Plan & Downtown Development Update, Main Street Project Planning Discussion (below), AMI Water Meter Technology: Upgrade Bids & Discussion, and Cemetery Discussion - possible expansion

Day 2:

Blowing Rock Tourism Development Authority Update, Paid Parking Program Discussion, Park Avenue One-Way Traffic Discussion
 Police Items: Night Shift Differential, K-9 Unit Addition (with demonstration), Electric Vehicles
 24/7 Ambulance Need, Communication Equipment Building Replacement, and IT Needs & Planning

Day 3:

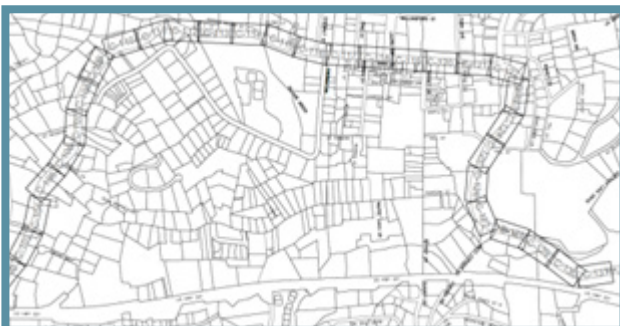
Memorial Park Update, Storm water Fund Discussion, Water Topics: Needs & Updates, 2023 Board Applicants, Town Hall Renovations Update, Employee Child Development Center Discussion, Shuttle Bus, Retreat Recap & Timeline

Main Street Projects Update

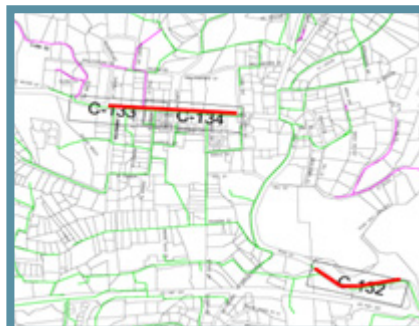
Main Street Water and Sewer Line Replacements

In early 2022, the Town of Blowing Rock was awarded a funding from the NC General Assembly via Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in the amount of \$4.8 Million dollars to replace the main water and sewer lines that service Main Street. These lines have been in service since the early 1900s and are nearing the end of their expected service life according to the material the current lines are comprised of. Over the years, the Town has experienced repeated leaks on the lines, also indicating the replacements are due. Funding requests were championed by NC House Representative Ray Pickett working in concert with the Town on applying for the funds.

The project includes replacement of existing water lines with a new 8-inch water line along Main Street from Broyhill Furniture on the south end to Chetola Lake on the north end. The replacement will also include new fire hydrants and service connections to the meters. Also included is replacement of an 8-inch gravity sewer from Chestnut Drive north to Park Avenue, replacing a line also installed in the early 1900s. This element will include the main line, manholes, and service connections to the sidewalk. Sidewalks will also be extended at the North end of Main St. (depiction below) and Main Street will be resurfaced following project completion (funded by NCDOT, approx. 2024). Project bids have been solicited and received, with the project to go before Town Council in March for final approval to move forward. Bids received were within the budget amount of \$4.8 Million. This project will be fully funded with the ARPA funding and no tax dollars are anticipated to be needed to complete the project. Work is planned to begin during the summer of 2023, with an anticipated completion of early to late 2024. Work in the Central Business district will be planned to minimize impact during peak days. Weekend work is not expected. The work will only cause minimal interruptions to customers services as the new service line is connected, a matter of hours. With a project of this nature, there will be unforeseen issues that could also disrupt service, just as any main line leak can cause. Work along Main Street will be staged, with one utility at a time being placed underground. Once all of the work is complete, the entire road will be resurfaced. During construction in each section, parking along Main Street will be closed, and at times, there will be active traffic control to only allow one lane to pass at a time.



Water Line Replacement Plan



Sewer Line Replacement Plan



The North End of Main Street

Important Numbers

Town Hall..... 828-295-5200
 Planning & Inspection .. 828-295-5240
 Parks & Recreation 828-295-5222

Non-Emergency

Police Administration ... 828-295-5212
 Fire Administration 828-548-2800

After Hours/Weekend Water or Sewer

Emergency 828-295-5210
 Emergency Police & Fire 911

Upcoming Meetings

BRAAC

(First Tuesday of the month)
 March 7th at 9:00am

Town Council

(Second Tuesday of the month)
 March 14th at 6:00pm

Planning Board

(Third Thursday of the month)
 March 16th at 5:30pm

Upcoming Events

Blowing Rock 134th Celebration
 March 12th

Annual Trout Derby
 April 1st

Blowing Rock Easter Egg Hunt
 April 1st



Annual Drinking Water Quality Consumer Confidence Report (CCR)

Drinking Water Quality Consumer Confidence Report (CCR)

The Town of Blowing Rock has released the 2022 Drinking Water Quality Report. The report is available online here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p866s63> or may be obtained at Town Hall: 1036 Main Street. If you have any questions about the reports, please contact the Water Plant at (828) 295-5225.

Happy Birthday!

Come celebrate our 134th birthday with a community potluck dinner on March 12th from 5:00-7:00pm at the Blowing Rock Conference Center. Bring your favorite covered dish and a canned good for donation. All Blowing Rock residents are welcome!

For more information, reach out to the Chamber at (828) 295-7851.



A Blowing Rock Chamber initiative, the Town of Blowing Rock is currently considering additional work on Main St. following the installation of the new water and sewer lines, to bury the overhead power, cable, and communications service lines below the road in underground conduit space. The conduit that will house the lines would be separate from that that holds the water and sewer lines and would require additional trenching and installation of separate conduit.

Following the 2023 Town Council Winter Retreat Town Council gave Town staff and engineers the go-ahead to solicit construction bids for the underground utilities project in conjunction with the bidding process for the Main St. Water and Sewer Line Replacement project, with bids having been received, the project will potentially come before Council for consideration in March or April and include discussions of funding options. The Town has used the time since the project was approved for design at the 2022 Winter Retreat to review the Town's current debt and determine possible ways to fund the project should the project be approved to move forward. The possible options as well as project costs will potentially be presented at the March or April Town Council meeting. Moving forward with this portion of the project will be considered at this meeting also. Estimates of project costs have ranged from \$4-7 Million. The bid for the project was recently received and totals \$6.4 million.

Costs breakout and potential phasing are shown in the chart [here](#).

Town Engineers are actively in discussion with contractors on the scope and project details in an effort to refine pricing as much as possible. The current plan for project timeline would put the work to begin following the installation of both the new Water and Sewer lines along Main Street, with the start of utility line work to being at the end of 2023. The project would likely be completed in two phases with the first to take place over the course of 2024 and would include trenching and installation of the conduit as well as power vault boxes that will be

Provider/Service	Feb 2023 Bid Phase 1	Feb 2023 Bid Phase 2
BREMCO	\$ 160,000.00	\$ 1,435,470.25
Ridge link	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 270,000.00
AT&T	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 360,735.84
Sky Best	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 107,668.20
Charter	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
Reconnections		\$ 15,000.00
Trenching and Patching	\$ 2,804,085.00	
Conduit	\$ 650,000.00	
Landscape/Hardscape		\$ 100,000.00
Construction Engineering	\$ 180,000.00	
Misc. /Contingency /Legal	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 80,000.00
Total:	\$ 4,000,085.00	\$ 2,428,874.29
Grand Total:	\$	6,428,959.29

required to be installed in some areas of Main Street. The second phase that would include the actual relocation of the lines and removal of power poles would take place over the following year. The Town Council invites the public to attend the March and April meetings or watch via our Live broadcast of the meeting on the Town's YouTube channel for further information about the project. Town Council meeting agendas are posted on the Town's website (townofblowingrocknc.gov) the Friday before the meeting, so you can check there on meeting topics each month! Below are graphics showing aspects and renderings of the project.



South end of Main Street, near the Episcopal Church



South end of Main Street, near Storie Street Grill

Paid Parking

Police Chief Aaron Miller presented to Town Council an update on the downtown paid parking initiative planning, indicating that several meetings have taken place with a representative group of stakeholders as well as internal working groups in order to develop some system parameters such as cost to park and pay to park hours and days. Chief Miller reported that the cost of



Above is an example of a parking meter kiosk

\$2/hour for the first 3 hours (\$4/hour after 3) for Downtown Parking and \$1/hour for the Parking Structure (with a max of 5 hours in 24 hours) was discussed in the meetings, with paid parking to take place between the hours of 9:00am-5:00pm Monday through Saturday, 1:00pm-5:00pm on Sundays. On street parking would be located on Main Street, Sunset Drive, Pine Street, Park Avenue, Ginny Stevens Lane and Wallingford Street. Off street parking would include the parking decks, Maple Street Lot and the swimming pool lot (Davant Field Lot will remain free. This will be reevaluated if additional remote parking areas are built).

Chief Miller indicated there would be a one time cost of approximately \$72,500 to get the program started, and an annual cost of approximately \$269,000 to operate and administer the paid parking program. Possible revenue amounts were presented with the rates listed above as



Above is a side view of the parking kiosk to the left

\$1,375,164 annual gross for the Downtown Parking and \$122,000 annual gross revenue for the Parking Structures. Town Council discussed that funds derived from the program after paying for the cost of the program to operate could be used to build additional parking structures and help in covering the cost of maintenance of existing parking areas in Town.

A timeline for possible implementation was discussed program in late summer to early fall of 2023. Town Council stated their desire to distribute parking program information prior to implementation of the program. March 28th at 6:00pm there will be a meeting facilitated by Chief Aaron Miller at the American Legion Hall to discuss paid parking as well as address public questions.

Memorial Park Update

Town Council received an update on the proposed upgrades to Memorial Park including updated and additional restrooms in the park. Back in March 2022, the Town of Blowing Rock was awarded a Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant in the amount of \$500,000. The grant requires a 50% match by the Town, with a total estimated project cost of \$1,285,000 (including construction, contingency and engineering). The Town has received allocations from the ABC Store (\$200,000) and Tourism Development Authority (\$60,000) towards the required match as well as earmarked remaining GO Bond proceeds (\$431,345) to complete the project, with an additional (\$91,655) in funding to be identified. Bids were solicited and only one bid was received requiring a rebidding of the project. Town Council will now meet to consider the received bid in March, however, the bid received did exceed the overall budget for the project, therefore it is possible the project will be put on hold and deferred for an additional bid to take place later to attempt to gain more bids for the project and lower costs. Using match funds to begin a portion of the project is also being explored at this time.

Look for future updates on this project!



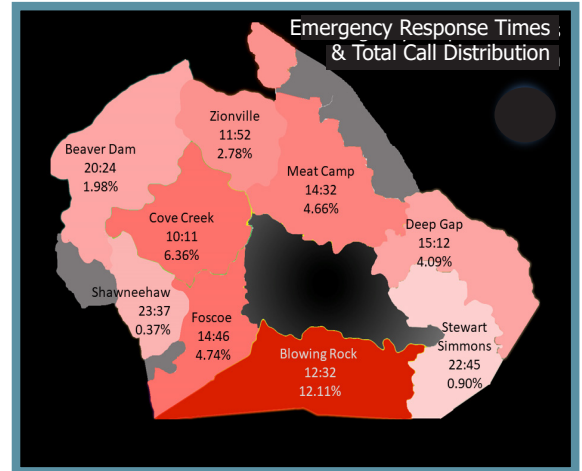
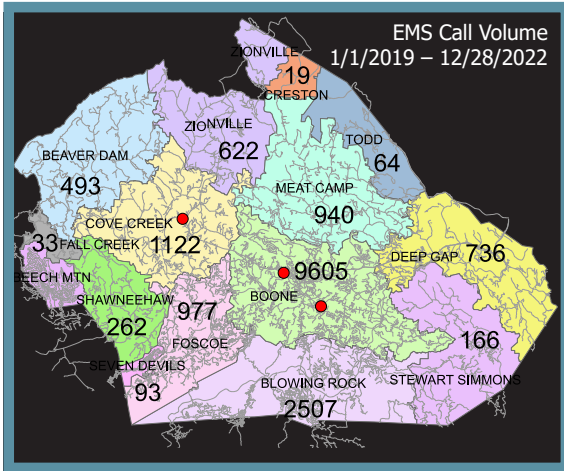
Items To Be Added/Altered

- Replaced sidewalks from the restroom to the gazebo
- Pickleball courts with retaining walls
- Resurfaced basketball court for pickleball
- Solar panels on the restrooms
- Solar path lighting (alternate)
- Relocated dumpster and added sidewalk/step connector
- Gaga Ball pit with seat wall

Ambulance Base in Blowing Rock

Blowing Rock Fire Chief Kent Graham gave Town Council a presentation concerning the need for a County ambulance base in closer proximity to Blowing Rock. Chief Graham presented emergency response data for Blowing Rock and gave striking response time comparisons to our area as a whole. This data (examples below) highlights the need for an ambulance base located closer to the Town limits of Blowing Rock due to the overall average response time not meeting the fractal response time.

The Town Council plans to continue to petition the Watauga County Board of Commissioners to locate an additional County ambulance base near Blowing Rock to more adequately serve our portion of the County.



PUBLIC REQUEST

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS STUDY AND MODIFICATION PROCESS

Based on recommendations from the 2014 Comprehensive Plan and request from the Blowing Rock Town Council, a subcommittee has been formed representing the Planning Board, Town Council, and at-large community members to study the current development standards for the downtown area. The purpose is to evaluate and establish new standards for East Main Street and West Main Street, and then the rest of the downtown Central Business-zoned properties. There was an extensive study in 2018 followed by a recommendation from the Planning Board. That recommendation was put on hold in early 2019. During this current process, the subcommittee is seeking more public input to assist with the evaluation and decision-making.

INITIAL GOALS:

1. Preserve the downtown character
2. Simplify the Land Use Ordinance
3. Focus on increasing green space on the west side of Main Street
4. Revisit and evaluate the current architectural standards
5. Involve the public in the process

WHAT WE ARE ASKING:

The Town is asking for citizen input on what you consider **unfavorable** about downtown development (buildings, styles, colors, materials, setbacks, building heights, landscaping, etc.). Please drop a short written comment or observation to Planning Director Kevin Rothrock at kevin@townofblowingrocknc.gov. Please send written comments by April 3, 2023.

STEPS FORWARD:

The subcommittee will use the public written comments to summarize Town citizens' views on downtown development, the historic character, building materials, green space, setbacks, building heights, and related concerns. The subcommittee will use the summary to draft Land Use Code amendments for downtown. In late spring or summer of 2023, the Town plans to have a public forum to discuss the potential code amendments. If you have further questions, please contact Kevin Rothrock at 828-295-5240 or by email at kevin@townofblowingrocknc.gov.