

# Town Council Meeting - Tuesday, January 10th, 2023

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

parking, pay, town, passport, park, residents, retreat, numbers, parking spaces, staff, permitting, revenue, questions, council, year, blowing, approve, problem, talked, main street

## SPEAKERS

All, Alan Thompson, David Harwood, Aaron Miller, Tracy Brown, Doug Matheson, Shane Fox, Albert Yount, Kevin Rothrock, Pete Gherini, Charlie Sellers, Rick Parsons

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 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 and Pete Gherini. Council Member Melissa Pickett was unable to attend the meeting. Others in attendance were Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Public Works Director Matt Blackburn, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, IT Director Thomas Steele and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes.

### Charlie Sellers

I'm calling this meeting to order this January 10, 2023. Good evening, everybody, thanks for attending. Roll call for attendance. All were present but Councilwoman Pickett. Council could I get a motion to approve the minutes from December 13, 2022.

### Pete Gherini

So move.

### Charlie Sellers

Do I have a second?

### David Harwood

Second?

### Charlie Sellers

Any discussion? How do you vote?

**All**

All voted yes.

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a motion to approve the regular agenda?

**Doug Matheson**

So moved.

**David Harwood**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any discussion? How do you vote?

**All**

All voted to approve the regular agenda.

**Charlie Sellers**

Moving right along the Consent Agenda, do I have a motion to approve?

**Pete Gherini**

So move?

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second? Second. How do you vote?

**All**

All voted yes to approve consent agenda.

**Charlie Sellers**

Now we do allow for public comments, we wish that you would refrain from any longer in three minutes. If you would like to speak see Ms. Hilari over here and give her your name. Rick Parsons, just state your address.

**Rick Parsons**

Rick Parsons 1577 Green Hill Road. Mr. Mayor, Town Council Members, Shane, thank you so much. I had not planned to come speak tonight. That was until 6am this morning, when the same truck without its muffler come speeding down the road, like he does most days at 6am, very regular. And that changed my mind. I know in talking to all of you that none of you find it acceptable that cars travel at 40, 50, 60 miles an hour on residential streets in Blowing Rock. So my question would be, why do we continue to let it happen on Green Hill Road. It's not a new problem. It's not the only problem in this village in this town. But it is one that has been going on for far too long. There have been solutions.

There's been data that shows the problem, the magnitude of the problem, the time of the problem, the time the year of the problem. There have been public comments solicited. And there have been solutions to the problem. Solutions that I might add have even an already been implemented in this town. So again, I'm here to ask you before you go on your retreat, to consider solving this problem addressing the problem not just on Green Hill Road, but as I hear today on other roads in town. And in other cases, it's time to address this problem. It's not time to kick the can down the road any longer. Thank you very much. Rick,

**Charlie Sellers**

I do have a question, you say this was 6am this morning,

**Rick Parsons**

Pretty much, this guys quite regular. Okay, that's going south you have I mean, this is a, this is a problem you have. It's a cat three, we know it's true. Everybody knows is a cat through the people going from Moon down the mountain used to cut through and the people coming up the mountain going to Boone know what to cut through and they do the same thing. In the winter. It's not as bad. In the summer. It's all day long.

**Doug Matheson**

So thank you, Rick. Thank you.

**Charlie Sellers**

We have a special presentation this evening. Chief Aaron Miller. Hello, chief. How are you sir?

**Aaron Miller**

Chief Miller recognized Master Patrol Officer Hunt for obtaining his Tactical Certificate from the North Carolina Justice Academy.

**Charlie Sellers**

Congratulations Officer Hunt. Next, we have a year of the trail proclamation from TDA. Director Tracy Brown. Good evening, Mr. Brown.

**Tracy Brown**

Mayor and Council, I appreciate the opportunity to present just a little bit this evening and bring you up to speed on what the state is doing with 2023 being the year of the trail in North Carolina. I'm not necessarily going to give you a presentation but just give you a little background on it. Back in 2021, the North Carolina legislature and the governor signed off on proclaiming North Carolina as the great trail state and in 2023, we would celebrate 50 years of the 1973 North Carolina trail system act so now 50 years later, we are proclaiming North Carolina is the year the trail and we're hoping the great trails coalition has asked every municipality every county in the state to proclaim 2023 as the year the trail if we could do it. And we have prepared the proclamation for the town appreciate you all being willing to sign off on this couple of things that you might want to be or you may be interested in the mission of North Carolina the year of the trail campaign is to showcase and celebrate North Carolina's trails encouraging ongoing participation, investment and development among locals and legislators. The

purpose for the year the trail is to celebrate North Carolina's vast and diverse collection of trails and encourages all of us to recognize our role as champions of these special resources. The vision is a future in which each of the state's 100 counties experienced the proven benefits of trails and advocate for their ongoing growth and development in the values is participation inclusivity stewardship, connectivity and collaboration. You know how many great trails we have right here in Bowling Rock we've been we've been stewards and owners of the Glen Burney Trail since 1906. We've been in a well over 100 years. So we just are asking the town to make this proclamation so that we can celebrate along with the rest of the state. And saying that Blowing Rock is a part of the year the trail. Mr. Brown read the proclamation.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you, Mr. Brown. Do I have a motion to accept this proclamation?

**Pete Gherini**

So moved.

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second?

**Doug Matheson**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any discussion?

**All**

All were in favor of the proclamation. Tracy, thank you so much for everything you do for the town and the citizens.

**Charlie Sellers**

Now we come down to the 2021-2022 audit presentation. This is Alan Thompson. Mr. Thompson, thank you for joining us this evening.

**Alan Thompson**

Presented the audit results from the 2021-2022 audit.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you.

**Alan Thompson**

As Alan was leaving, I would just say thank you to his firm. This is our first year with Thomson Price, we did make the switch this past year after being with Martin Starnes for three years. And then I can't give you the number of hours that Ms Norman has spent on this audit. But I would say it's in the excess of hundreds and hundreds of hours of time and dedication that it took the changing of an audit firm is a

good thing a lot of times because it puts fresh eyes and new things back into play that maybe others did not see or have grown accustomed to seeing. But with that comes a great deal of time and dedication from our finance staff, which is Ms. Norman putting into that so this firm, I think is a good firm. I've got experiences with him. They are growing across the state. So I would recommend that we stay with him hopefully for quite some time. Thank you.

### **Charlie Sellers**

Now we have an update on paid parking Chief Aaron Miller. Hello, Chief.

### **Aaron Miller**

So in January of 2022, at the Council Retreat, we talked a lot about a pay to park proposal. Council indicated they wanted us to move forward with gathering some information about that. And we've done that in the past year. So I think tonight, we wanted to have a full update, let you know exactly where we are. We're going to present the information tonight give you some time to digest that. So if you have any questions or more discussion, we can do that at the upcoming retreat and hopefully come to some kind of consensus maybe at the February meeting. So that's sort of where we're at. So we'll go through this. And I'm going to recap some of the things that very hurriedly that we talked about at the retreat last year. This is going back to the Roger Brooks study, Roger Brooks, obviously came TDA brought him in to do a study about tourism. That's sort of what prompted our parking discussion was that presentation. These were just some of the numbers we looked at from that presentation last year. The town should have 1,500 parking spaces now. out, which means we need an additional 600 parking spaces. And this was according to Roger Brooks, which I concur with his assessment on that. And this was the big takeaway from his presentation for me was Blowing Rock doesn't have tourism problem, we have a parking problem. These were some numbers that Mr. Brooks came up with some potential revenue generation numbers that we took a look at. I'm going to, hurriedly going through this first part, because it's a recap. We've been over this a couple of times. This was a revenue projection that I put together, it was pretty similar. It was based on the TDA occupancy numbers for their hotel occupancies, based on our number of parking spaces and different lots. This is just some numbers that I put together that we had a potential 1.3 million in parking revenues that we could take advantage of. So here are the benefits that we talked about last year of pay to park. Fairly consistently to accomplish the goals of the town. And that's the most important thing of our goals is to turnover, parking on Main Street shops or whatever this is a good way to make sure that we achieve those goals. Provides fair and equitable use of our parking, provides opportunities for public and private partnerships. And down here at the bottom, it also gives us a way to generate revenues for additional parking that are shared by some of our visitors and not on the backs of the taxpaying residents here. So these are the different folks that parking effects in our town, you can see that list. We've talked about it a couple times the residents, businesses, churches, visitors, town departments, and staff and other organizations. So the first thing that we did after the retreat last year was we put together this advisory committee and the goals of this advisory committee were to answer some of these questions to decide if pay to park is right for Blowing Rock, what impact it would have, what the rates should be if we decide to move forward with pay to park and those types of things. So the group did meet, there was 16 or 17 people, I think total on the committees. We had three or four meetings, they did come up with a list of recommendations based on these questions that were posed. So these are the recommendations that that first advisory group came up. They were unanimous Well, I think there was one objecting vote, but most everybody was in

favor of implementing a paid park system in Blowing Rock. They decided that our pay to park times should be Monday through Saturday, from 9am until 5pm On Sundays from 1pm to 5pm, leaving the Sunday morning slot free for the church traffic that leaves our town parking spaces to hold their services. And they also agreed that we needed to reserve a few spaces in some area, which we felt like a street parking area would be the best for residents only. That does not mean that residents do not have to pay, it just simply meant that they would have the availability to find the space. Here's some of the parking rates that they recommended. On our on street parking, it was \$2 an hour for the first three hours, and then it increased to \$3 an hour after three hours. Off street parking, all the off street parking lots were \$1.50 per hour, for that time. And we would leave the Davant parking area as free parking for the folks that work in our businesses in town who may not have parking provided by the business, a free place to park and we also discussed reevaluating that at some point in the future. If we did build some offsite parking somewhere else. In addition, the revenue is estimates that Roger Brooks put together that I put together. Shane and Nicole also asked for First Tron Advisors to put together a revenue estimate and I'm going to let Shane go over that revenue estimate.

### **Shane Fox**

Absolutely, Ms. Norman spoke with First Tryon, which you all are familiar with, especially during our retreat time working through our debt capacity and looking as our financial advisor. They worked with the town on our bond issuance, continue to work for the town moving forward with some of our upcoming debt that we have. So they put together a pretty neat template here. It's very interactive, and I won't go through all the details here. We'll do this more at the retreat. bringing this up. But everything you see here is essentially interchangeable. So everywhere you see highlighted sale, as in 51 spots, or whether that's \$2, an hour, eight hours, four hours on Sundays. You'll see here we've got some different percentages in here based on the months what we feel like, or what they conservatively felt like these numbers have changed or can be changed, I should say, as we go through this. This template also allows us to go more in depth of future expansion. So we have options here. And again, going into more detail at the retreat, of turning on assumptions and filling in some of that information. What it allows us to do is as we go through and talk about whether it's \$2. Now, we're not doing that, whether we're doing for eight hours a day, or six hours a day, or whatever we come up with, we have the ability to do a pretty quick and easy input and spit out some information that is easy for all of us to understand also allows us and Chief Miller has been great and providing them with some information, along with not only the capital potential needs, but operating needs as well, and what that may look like with some growth opportunities. So you'll see a tab here for parking system expenditures, with some numbers in it for parking staff, some software calls, etc., that's going on along with some startup cost. Again, without getting too far in the weeds right now, this ratio allows us and this template allows us to be able to put together information or take the information that we have and generate out the deliverables of what paid parking may look like. And so as we're you're hearing numbers from Roger Brooks, as chief Miller has put together numbers, this gives us more of an interactive feel, as we play around and work through some of that data of what that may look like. But, for instance, you'll see the information that I have here, we've provided this information through our current inventory. Total existing paid parking spots are 487, 51 spots, that would be the Davant Field parking area. So as of this assumption, we have 190 spaces that we considered on street parking. That's the list that was shown just a few minutes ago, mainly Main Street, of course, Sunset Park Avenue, as well. Our proposal or the committee's proposal is \$2 an hour, our off street or surface lots at \$1.50 an hour. And

then our existing parking next again, at \$1.50 an hour. This assumption that you see here takes eight hours into account Monday through Saturday and four hours on Sunday. And again, if you want it to be uniform, and just simply use 50% as a number, just as a placeholder. What this allows us to do is look at our system overview. You'll see here that 50% number that we're using here, 12 months out a year, again, that may be high that may be conservative, will produce \$815,000 for our street parking and surface lots and \$294,000 for our parking deck for a potential total revenue of 1.1 million. Back out our expenditures initially that includes some startup cost of say \$700,000, this shows in the first year, approximately a net revenue of \$400,000 from parking that can be utilized for additional parking, debt service and parking, upgrading our current parking, etc. within that. So again, I don't want to go too far into the to the details of these numbers. Because these are hypotheticals, these are assumptions that we're making. First Tryon did a fantastic job, Ms. Norman did a fantastic job of providing them with information that we can then use this data to start making some decisions and seeing potential outcomes within that. Again, a lot of these numbers that we're using here are hypothetical numbers and assumptions exactly as it says here. Just wanted to take a few moments and show you the details of what's out there. And then as we start thinking through maybe some final numbers and final theories of how we want to implement this, if we do want to implement paid parking, then this will give us some closer deliverables to what that may look like.

#### **Aaron Miller**

Couple of things about revenue and expenses, the expenses are really easy for us to calculate. We know what that is pretty close. Revenues as Shane says we're speculating a few things like the occupancy of our parking. Until we have one or two years of pay to park under our belts, we're not going to know 100% for sure what the revenue generation or revenue potential might be. So we're doing the best we can with the information that we have available to try and come up with some of this. But so far, what makes me feel good about it is all the projections are somewhat in line. They're not they're not too far apart. So hopefully we'll be somewhere in the ballpark. Another thing about the revenue and expense projections as we go through this is I'm only taking into account the pay to park it's not taking into account any kind of violation revenues that maybe generated no parking citations, or any of the expenses that go along with parking citations, hopefully there'll be zero. So that'll be a mute point. But obviously, there'll be some revenue generated from parking citations. And obviously, there'll be some expenses that will occur as we issue those citations and do those mailings. Any questions so far?

#### **Pete Gherini**

Aaron, you mentioned on Maple Street for residents only are you going to have some kind of ID or identification that all local residents will be able to put on their car so they can be identified?

#### **Aaron Miller**

Well, it'll all be done electronically. So our pay to park system will be based on your license plate number. And so there's different ways, we've talked about the different methods that you can utilize pay to park, you get a ticket, put on your dash, or you register your license plate, or you have to actually park in a number of space. So we don't want the number of parking spaces in town, we don't want to have to pull a ticket and have to take that back to your car. So it will only be a license plate. So we'll have a registration system, a permitting system, if you will. And the residents that are interested in



taking advantage of that, once it's fully automated will be able to go online, register their vehicles, if they are a resident of the Town of Blowing Rock, we will verify that, we will approve that and based on their license plate numbers, they'll be able to park in those spots.

**Pete Gherini**

This question is for Shane, how and where is the money going to go? I mean, is it going to go into a special parking fund. And can you talk a little bit about what you and Nicole are going to do to keep that money separate? It doesn't go into the general fund? Right?

**Shane Fox**

Yeah, so this is a separate fund this is considered a special revenue fund. This is a special revenue source. So this money would be restricted to utilizing it within that particular source. So for us, it'd be parking, whether that's additional parking, upgraded parking, there's a number of things obviously, that can go in that other than what Chief Miller will talk about few minutes are our typical reoccurring operating cost. And so absolutely the money itself, the plan is to use that money to only continue to better parking. And there's more to come from that. Once we start this process of what that looks like, you know, we had discussed and started this conversation back with Roger Brooks, about utilizing these monies or debt service that would offset additional parking, new parking structure a parking deck. Those are absolutely possibilities within that. So all things parking, so to speak, is what the outcome or what the use of this would be that would be within sight of the special revenue fund. So it would be restricted to be used for that purpose.

**Charlie Sellers**

If I may elaborate on Pete's question does the state not mandate that money has to be utilized in certain areas?

**Shane Fox**

The auditor Mr. Thompson, that would be part of his job as he came in and did that work within that there is a little bit of oddness, I think that we're not quite ready to fully flush out with our on street parking versus off street parking. I think there's a statute or two there, we got to figure some things out of how that money is being utilized. It's still being used for parking.

**Aaron Miller**

I think the only place that would even possibly apply will be for violations, not for paid parking itself, but only for monies that are collected from violations. And even then a lot of those monies can be used to offset your expenses, your enforcement expenses, which is almost all of your parking expenses.

**Shane Fox**

The initial thought process, at least among staff is that once we work out the details, and there's a lot of details, you have to be worked out. And that's hopefully what we use tonight and at the retreat for us kind of working through some of these questions like Maple Street, whether that's any parking at all for residents, or if that's all Maple Street parking for residents. I mean, there's a lot of details to be worked there, whether that's \$2 an hour if that's \$1 an hour. The beauty and I don't want to steal any thunder that may be coming. The beauty of this process if we go with the recommendation of staff, which is



through the pay to park program, like say a passport company, anything you can think of can be modified within the system. So it allows for us to essentially start from the base and work our way up to whatever specifications we want to include in that. Whether that's special rates for businesses and permits or not whether that's called whitelisting, and putting individuals on a list that allows certain individuals to park in certain areas. If you can think of it there's a chance they can put into play and make it happen within them. So we're just trying to narrow down some of these concepts and some of these options into some of the recommendations that Chief Miller is talking about tonight.

**Aaron Miller**

And again, the recommendations that we've talked about thus far have been recommendations from the advisory committee that was approved by Council and came back with the recommendations after having some meetings and discussing final decisions in all these matters.

**Albert Yount**

So it's still in the weeds who's really going to administrate this?

**Aaron Miller**

Well, we have a plan and we will present that plan and it'll be up to Council to approve or not approve that plan.

**Shane Fox**

So there's many, many companies and we've talked to a number of them, we've had them here, we've gone through some demos. Again, I think it's coming up passport, is the company that we would recommend as being our parking app, and our kind of back office enforcement company as been our recommendation.

**Charlie Sellers**

And Council then you would have to approve that.

**Aaron Miller**

When you say administer, the Town of Blowing Rock would administer all the programs, were just simply working with vendors to provide the technology, the apps, the back office software vendor to provide. There's, you know, three major pieces to this pay to park component. There's the multi space pay stations, you may call those kiosk. That's one piece, there's the pay to park app, that is one piece. And the third piece is the enforcement piece. So our goal, when we start deciding who the vendors will be, is to try to keep that number of vendors to the smallest number that we can. So we don't have too many people that we have to work with, and around with the technology. So we're trying to look at companies that can provide more than one of those components. And I will try to get into that here in a second. So I actually didn't put any slides in tonight to talk about specific vendors. But we'll talk a little bit about the selection process that we've discussed. There's some collective purchasing organizations out there. And we work through collective purchasing organizations all the time, for example, our police cars that we buy, or purchase through a collective Purchasing Association. It's actually the Sheriffs Association, but that's a private purchasing alliance. So all of the companies that we were interested in looking at that provide the recognition that we're looking for, that have services in North Carolina that

can provide the the technology that we're looking for. All of these companies are already a part of a of the national cooperative purchasing alliance. And they have already submitted their qualifications and they've submitted bids to that organization. So we're going to try to select vendors through that purchasing alliance. People who have already been in business work with these municipalities, the National Cooperative purchasing alliance works with hundreds if not thousands of municipalities throughout the country. I've got a big long list of the ones I've worked with in North Carolina. It's a long, long list. But that's what we based the selection process on. So we wanted to find an app vendor that was well known in our area, or a tourist town, we wanted people to be able to come to Blowing Rock see the sign that says passport parking, and they know who that is. They already have that app loaded in their phone because passport is in the Asheville market, Raleigh market, Charlotte market in these different markets, and they specialize in municipal parking. There's some apps and companies that are best suited for private parking lots. And that's fine. That's their niche and they do best they are passport services, a lot of municipalities they have a good track record. Passport also provides the enforcement application. So we can only deal with one vendor for our pay to park app and our enforcement, software and technology. So that was an advantage to them. We've looked at some companies to provide the multi pay stations, flow bird would be my recommendation currently, through the National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance. They're a company that works closely with passport already. They're familiar with one another, they have multi space base stations, that I would recommend. A lot of these numbers that we're getting ready to talk about as far as expenses came from these two companies and their presentations. So that's how we narrow down these numbers. So the initial startup cost, we have to purchase the vehicle, a license plate reading system, that's how we're going to do parking enforcement, which is basically some high tech cameras that are mounted on the vehicle that reads those license plates, as it drives by and tells you that car is paid to park, that car didn't pay to park, that car paid but they are over time. So that is how it will flag on the computer inside of the parking enforcement vehicle. So that's a pretty significant cost. The multi space meters is another huge cost. We're recommending purchasing about 10 of those initially. To see how that goes. We feel like most of our patrons, visitors, residents in town will probably take advantage of the parking apps and do that from their smartphones. It's really easy to do. I think we went through, I talked about that in my previous presentations, I pulled up to the passport parking space in Raleigh, I had a new cell phone, so I didn't have the app already on my phone, so I took out my cell phone, scan the barcode within two minutes. This is not having the app on my phone at all. Within two minutes, the app was loaded, it was set up and I paid for my parking. So once that app is already loaded on your phone, you're talking about 20 or 30 seconds to punch a couple buttons on your phone and pay for your parking session. And it'll give you reminders that your parking session is about to expire or whatever on your smartphone. So that's what we're looking at and we feel like we can spread those multi space pay stations out a little wider than maybe you might expect. And we're only putting those in for customers who maybe don't have a smartphone, don't like to use technology or want to pay cash. So there's still a percentage of folks out there who are paying cash and the meters or the pay stations. Raleigh, for example, I think it's about 17% of their parking customers are paying by cash. So we did want to make sure that that was an option, and space those in places that are fairly convenient for people to get to. So that's a huge part of the startup cost initial startup costs, we came up with about \$160,000 of additional capital investment. In the remainder of this year, we wanted to roll out the pay to park before our busy tourist season began. That way we have a little time to work out the kinks before it's super busy. So we would have some expenses that we incur during the remainder of this fiscal year. Those expenses that we will have for the remainder of this

fiscal year is approximately \$72,500, you can see what that's for, obviously, the largest cost is personnel, the largest recurring costs will always be personnel. The recurring expenses going forward for the years to come. Obviously, personnel is the highest one again \$230,000, we've estimated that we need three people, three additional staff to manage the parking program, and that'll include having the parking enforcement person out seven days a week, they will also be helping with parking spaces that make people up for events and that type of activity. They'll help with that and a person to manage the pay to park program. And that's everything from doing maintenance on the parking kiosk, to making sure that the collection programs running smoothly to making sure that the accounting spreadsheets, all the money's counted and deposited in the bank and Nicole gets the paperwork she needs to make sure that's all accounted for. So that's what the management person will do. Outside of that the next biggest expenses is reoccurring software fee the very biggest one of the interest is the permitting system, the permitting piece so that we can permit people to park in the resident only spaces or in certain other private lots as we deem necessary moving forward. That's the most expensive piece of the recurring software. I think it was like \$27,000, just for that one piece of software. So it's not cheap. Total recurring annually is \$269,000. Any questions about expenses before we move on?

### **Doug Matheson**

How come that software is a recurring expense? After you put it in once, how is that a year after year expense?

### **Aaron Miller**

Some of those software's the first six are that particular permitting piece is not. I think, in the software world, the trend is to move to annual fees on software, if you use Microsoft Word, these office products, any of these things are going to annual fees so they can generate more money. That's basically why. Most of the software is but that one particular piece of software will be an annual recurring.

### **Shane Fox**

If I may, I will add Mr. Steele, Thomas will be presenting at the retreat as well about possibly expanding our Wi-Fi to all these areas, we do have difficulty with cell service. And so one of the things that he will be presenting, will show an overview of where our current free Wi-Fi exists. And it's pretty limited. It's right around the park area here and a little bit, you know, a couple small areas. He's been working with an outside vendor and will present the results of that study that's taking place of what that would look like and what we need there to expand Wi-Fi, essentially, to all pay parking areas. And so as you get out your car, in a paid parking area, you'd have a free Wi-Fi option course, would have signage as well, helping cause we all know the frustration with that. Right now there is no way, but the expansion would allow that. And I don't want to take away from Thomas's expertise. But he will share that at the retreat, what that would look like and what service and signal we would get, again, not cell signal, but Wi-Fi signal of what that would look like. We definitely have to have that before we can even think about initiating this parking program. Correct. We're looking to pair the two together and have them both at the same time. That's correct. Mr. Steele will present that at the retreat during this update on the topic.

### **Aaron Miller**

Just one more note, just a reminder on the revenues or on the cost of the program. That number does not include the enforcement activities. Other than the personnel. What I mean by that is, there's a one

time if you receive a parking citation, and we bill it through the passport, there'll be \$1 surcharge against the passport, we will recoup that in the citation money that we collect from the customer. So the expenses will not only offset one another, but we will generate revenues from that. But just know that in the future, when you see a spreadsheet, there could be some cost increases, the more citations we write, those costs go up a little bit, but we should have income from the citation revenue to completely cover that and generate additional revenues. And I have no idea how to there's no way to predict that. There's no way to guessing what that might look like. So we'll just see what happens in the future.

### **David Harwood**

Chief with regard to cost. I'm somewhat familiar with passport. And I know that in large metropolitan areas uses were not a large metropolitan area and so I fully expect that this is scalable. When we get tongue in cheek those other 600 parking spaces. But is there some type of economy of scale? And are we paying a premium for this given our size?

### **Aaron Miller**

Yeah, that's a really good question. The money that we pay to passport doesn't come from the town budget. That is a fee that's assessed to each customer when they pay to park. So we other than the permitting software and that sort of goes back to Doug's question why that permitting software cost, passport doesn't have any way to generate income from that permitting software, so they have to charge a fee for it. But there are other software's and their other services, those fees are in addition to pay to park. So when you go on your app, and we charge \$2 an hour Park on Main Street, when you pay for your parking session, they're going to charge you \$2 per hour plus, that additional fee, that passport gets on top of that, which is I think it's .25 cents per transaction. Some of the companies are .35 cents per transaction, but there's a few cents on additional entry. And that's how passport makes money. The only thing that is scalable, the permitting software. Passport doesn't know and we don't know what to tell them. We don't know how many permit applications we're going to have, if we don't have as many permit applications as maybe we anticipate passport has already said that they can scale that amount back some. If we go way over the number, which I don't expect we would we might have to readjust that cost. But right now, we're looking at scaling it down, maybe not up. That would be worst case scenarios, what we priced here, there is maybe some room to negotiate that.

### **Shane Fox**

I would add one of the common questions that initially we discussed with the companies is who pays that fee. So whether or not that's taken out of our hourly rate. And again, that's will be up to you all to help us decide right now we've included that \$2, that \$1.50 an hour between the gross and net amount, we're not taking out the .25 or .35 cents. And the kiosk fee is a little bit different than the app fee. Like there's about a .10 cent fee, but we're passing that on to the consumer is what our proposal is, but we haven't, it's up to you all to help us work through.

### **David Harwood**

Those digital permits are issued through the app? It'll be a different program, it won't be through the app, the residents would have to go to our website. And what we'd like to see is an interface on our website, you click on the register bar, and you'll be able to go in there and put in your information that

would be forward into the police department automatically. And we will go into verify that information and approve that permit. So that's the way that would work.

**Shane Fox**

The permitting process, again, is what we make it so that can be from no permits to permit for employees and permit for residents apart. I mean, they can be as many different permits as you would like for it to be

**Doug Matheson**

My question on that was, so you got permit, and you pay for the permit in the lots full?

**Aaron Miller**

Well, we we're not proposing at this time that that permit, be at a cost. We think that should be free for town residents to register. And that would give them the ability to use those parking spaces if they're available. I think that's what was discussed. Some previous presentations we've made, I think we talked about maybe just 10 spaces initially in the Maple Street lots, or we talked about just having a few spaces that were residents only to give residents an opportunity to properly park, they would still pay the \$2 or the \$1.50 an hour fee to park there. But registering to be able to park there we can provide free now we can, if Council wants to, we can assess a fee to that and reduce the cost to the town reduce that \$36,000 or software fee. A lot of that, like I said that permitting software is one of the most expensive pieces, it's \$27,000. We can offset that \$27,000 by passing that on to the residents. Right now our proposal is that we don't and pay for that out of the parking income itself and not assess an additional fee to residents but that's totally up to Council.

**Doug Matheson**

We've also talked about giving or selling permits or monthly passes or whatever. What I was leading up to is what if you buy monthly pass and you can't find a place to park.

**Aaron Miller**

I can't make more parking spaces though that's the problem we're in right now. I mean, right now the residents don't have a place to park now. So what we're trying to do is generate some revenues to build some additional parking.

**Doug Matheson**

Well, what I'm saying be crazy to buy a pass when you can't guarantee a space.

**Aaron Miller**

Yeah, and I'm not sure, we're not proposing right now to be able to purchase passes in advance. We had talked about that, that was in a conversation that we've had. But as you recall we've had a lot of conversations since last January about parking. And I think currently, in our proposal, we're not proposing that be a part of it, that everybody just pay for their parking session when they arrived to park. I just think that'd be simpler. One reason we wanted to administer the program ourselves and keep it in house is so that we handle the complaints. It's us at the police department. So some of the negative comments that I've heard from other municipalities that farmed the entire thing out, they

contract the entire parking program out to a third party is that they have no local control. If somebody has a complaint, if you parked in the handicapped spot, and you're tag had fell down, and you have a legitimate reason why you shouldn't pay your parking citation, you can come to us and we can adjudicate that right in the police department, you don't have to get on the phone and call the toll free number and talk to somebody in another state. You know how that goes. So we want to keep as much local control as we can provide the customer service that people expect. Well, we're hopeful, we're going to present and I give you a chance to digest the information, come back with questions that you have. At the retreat, we'll have some time allotted to have some more conversation about it at retreat. And we would kind of like some decision, hopefully, by the first of February, obviously, that's up to you. But if we don't get something decided pretty soon, if you do, we'll move forward with pay to park. And we don't start implementing that soon, we will not be able to implement it prior to our busy tourist season. Because it's going to take some time to get these pay stations in all the software setup with the company.

**Doug Matheson**

One last question, I'll leave you alone until retreat. You know, we've talked before and I have brought it up before about, are we going to elongate some of these spaces to handle people like Blue Ridge Electric, who come in with larger trucks and cannot park in a single parking space. And they're here to try and find some lunch or something like that.

**Aaron Miller**

My personal opinion would be no.

**Charlie Sellers**

So they'd have to rent two spots?

**Aaron Miller**

Staff did have a conversation a little bit the other day, obviously, we're going through the resurfacing project coming up this coming year. There's some suggestions on different things, different things we might do to Main Street to change the appearance, maybe subtract a parking space here or add a parking space there. Whether we have loading zones, whether we don't have loading zones, I think that's a pretty big conversation in of itself to have as we get closer to the resurfacing of Main Street. And perhaps that's another work group that sits and has a conversation about that. If there's things you'd like to see different about Main Street, that's just strictly my personal opinion. I don't know whether Shane agrees or disagrees. That would just be my personal to talk about that then.

**Albert Yount**

Church parking involve yes, no or optional?

**Aaron Miller**

Optional, we have provided a plan. If the churches or other private parking lots would like to participate, we have a plan in place that we can come in and help them. Help them generate revenues and help them mitigate problems. But that is totally none of those numbers have been included in any of our revenue projections or cost projections, that would be totally separate. And that's totally 100% up to the



individual churches or owners of those parking areas. But we do have a plan if they choose to participate.

**Shane Fox**

Part of the discussion at the retreat will be if they do choose to participate and what that will look like and what options we have there. So the numbers that we presented tonight, do not include any of those spaces, whether that's at First Baptist or Rumble, or the Post Office or any of the private lots, we have discussed what that could potentially look like and we'll share that information with you. As what those numbers are, we have that data and the parking spaces. And what that might look like from we'll call it a revenue sharing standpoint, if there is some opportunities there. Of course, we just wanted to keep it simple. Our own space right now with this presentation. And I would add, it's come up several times over the past year, we're only talking a certain amount of time that we would enforce this parking. So there's a lot of early morning folks to come out. There's a lot of late night folks that come out, so to speak. And so what we're looking at, again, this is up to you to make that decision is what hours of the day do you want to enforce and have paid parking, whether that's 9-5, as I think committee suggested or 10-6 or whatever those numbers look like there still is going to be opportunity for free parking outside of those hours as well. So it's come up with folks coming into town early to get coffee and just needing a few minutes and things of that nature had come up. So we're trying to keep those in mind as we were working through this may not make sense to have paid parking at 7 in the morning. Maybe it only makes sense to have that starting at 9 or 10 when the shops start opening within that. So just keep all these things in mind as we go into the retreat for discussions.

**Aaron Miller**

And if you will, as you have questions or things you'd like to hear more about at the retreat, if you will forward those questions to Shane, so I can I'll give you as much detailed information as you like or I'll be as brief as you like. But if you'll send that information forwarded to us, we'll make sure that we try to have answers to the things that you have questions about or we get to retreat in talking about those.

**Charlie Sellers**

Good Council?

**David Harwood**

Great presentation, thank you very much.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you Chief. Thanks for your hard work and all the people on the committee All right moving right long here. We have got two public hearings coming up. This would be the church parking amendments to the code. Kevin Rothrock. Good evening, Kevin. How are you?

**Kevin Rothrock**

Good evening Mayor and Council during the review and public hearing for the Rumble Church Special Use Permit, I shared that the Planning Board made a recommendation to amend the parking requirements for churches. The recommendation was to only require parking for the area designated for services such as a sanctuary or chapel. That requirement is one parking space for every four seats



in the service area. Planning Board recommendation was to eliminate any parking requirements for other areas of the church as these are typically not used at the same time as church services. The attached draft ordinance has removed that parking required for the other services parts of the church. And as drafted this amendment would be for town center and central business is also the other zoning districts in town where churches are permitted. Interesting that it comes on the heels of talking about parking, but that was a recommendation from Planning Board from their November meeting and they discussed the Rumble Church special use permit. Any questions

**Charlie Sellers**

Questions Council? Ok, the public hearing is open. If you would like to speak on this particular issue, please step up to Hilari and we will go forward from there. Okay, do I have a motion to close the public hearing?

**Albert Yount**

So moved.

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second?

**Doug Matheson**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you. Any further discussion? Okay, we're out of public hearing. Someone want to make a motion to approve this amendment?

**Pete Gherini**

So moved.

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second.

**David Harwood**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any further discussion?

**David Harwood**

You said this is just Town Center and Central Business.

**Kevin Rothrock**

No as well as other zoning districts in Town where churches are allowed to become General Business, office institutions. Those are yours too.

**All**

All were in favor of the motion.

**Charlie Sellers**

Ok motion passes. Moving right along. We've got annexation Blowing Rock Brewing Company. And we get Mr. Kevin Rothrock once again.

**Kevin Rothrock**

Thank you. Blue Rock Brewing submitted a petition of voluntary satellite annexation for Council consideration that was before the December meeting. And we had two resolutions to move that actions forward. The property is 3.87 acres. Located currently in the ETJ on the southwest corner of Highway 321 and Emerson Road. The property is now currently zoned CZ, GB Conditional Zoning General Business. The applicant has submitted the petition for satellite annexation, as required by the approved conditional rezoning ordinance required Blowing Rock Brewery to go through this process for the purposes of connecting the Town utilities. Consistent with Town policy any property that desires connection to Town utilities must be located within the corporate limits. Blowing Rock Brewing is responsible for the costs of extension of any utilities to serve the property and any availability fees. And Blowing Rock Brewing is required to connected public water and sewer as the public water is deemed available. As the Town of Blowing Rock and Town of Boone completed a settlement agreement recently related to the emergency water supply agreement between the two entities. There are five points that need to be followed for satellite annexation, this property meets those requirements. And so, through the process of annexation, it appears that all those requirements have been satisfied. And if approved, as presented, the annexation will be become effective June 30, 2023. And there'll be a map recorded with the register deeds and with the North Carolina Secretary of State. The annexation ordinance has been attached and also the plan was attached to for your review. Questions?

**Charlie Sellers**

Council. Okay, this is also now up for public hearing. Do we have any residents that would like to speak on this particular issue? Okay. Do I have a motion to close the public hearing?

**Pete Gherini**

So moved.

**David Harwood**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any further discussion? Do I have a motion to approve?

**Doug Matheson**

So moved.

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second?

**Albert Yount**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any further discussion?

**All**

All in favor of the motion.

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay annexations approved. Official reports, I would like to say thank you to the Town of Boone Council. Thank you to the Blowing Rock Council. The Town Managers for Boone and Blowing Rock for working out all the details it took to get this interconnect agreement approved. It's been going on for many years. And now with this interconnect the Town of Boone and the Town of Blowing Rock are able to utilize it for water source within our city limits. And per say ETJ but actually city limits. So my thanks to the Council's for that. I would like to say thank you to our Town staff. This is probably the coldest Christmas, I can remember. Because I wasn't here in 1989, they said it was colder then. But our Town staff, Public Works, Police, Fire even our Town Manager jumped up to the plate and everybody was there and my thanks to all the staff. And I just I've gotten so many emails from residents applauding the Town staff and what they accomplished and how they were proactive. I love being proactive I hate reactive. So last but not least, well not almost last traffic light and Green Hill Road is installed. So hopefully those people that live on Green Hill will feel safer when pulling out and also off Gideon Ridge. It will be on caution flashing for about a week. And that is so people can familiarize themselves that there is now a traffic light on our four lane road at that location. It will not fully go into operation until they finish the striping and the striping will not be done until weather permits. So but the poles are up, the lights are up and everything's supposed to be completed and wired tomorrow. So as mayor I would like to thank Cullie Tarleton, who was able to pull this together because the Green Hill residents were very concerned. Which rightfully so. Last, 24/7 transport. This has been an issue for many years. Doug Matheson has spearheaded a lot of this. Many residents have been involved in the last few years there were a number of emails that floated around over Christmas between the Council myself and County Commissioners. After the County Commissioners had some meetings and with Watauga Medics, my hat's off to Watauga Medics and the County Commissioners they have gotten the ambulance transport looks like back here on a regular basis. From roughly 8 to 9 in the morning to 5ish or so. Which I feel like it's a great start. This is excellent. And I know the County Commissioners will definitely move forward with the needs of 24/7 transport in the near future. And I'm sure Doug would like to elaborate on this, we get down to Doug, because he's worked on this for 40 years. So I'm done. Oh, and Happy New Year to everybody. Thank you so much for all you all do for our Town.

**Albert Yount**

I would like to include Boone Area Chamber of Commerce and Blowing Rock Chamber, they did a lot of grunt work behind the scenes for the Brewery.

**David Harwood**

Yeah, I would like to echo the Mayor's comments on Town staff and the cold weather we'd had just excellent performance. And thank you so much. Congratulations to Officer Hunt. As I was sitting here thinking about 400 hours, beyond what you have to put in your 40 hours a week, I have to do some continuing education for my profession. And you know, it's like nothing compared to 400 hours. So kudos to Mr. Hunt. Chief Miller got away before I can thank the parking advisory committee and the chief that was a heavy lift and a lot of information. I'm looking forward to retreat to digesting that and moving forward with paid parking. Having been in organizations that are required to have an audit each year, if you're the financial manager it's sort of like your report card. And I would just like to commend Ms. Norman and Mr. Fox for an A plus, on your report card. I know that it's a lot of work. And always as business manager look forward to the audit, which is kind of sick. But I know you're the same way. And I suspect Ms. Norman is too. So congratulations on a good audit. A lot of work went into that. That's all I have.

**Doug Matheson**

I will elaborate a little bit more on what you'd said. One of the other person's out like thank is Chief Graham, and all his hard work that he is done to help us get some of the things corrected and some misunderstandings corrected. And so with going forward. I hope this is just the beginning of something that we can accomplish now. We've worked hard on this, the public's worked hard on this there's been calls and comments made by a lot of the public the Council Members here so I look forward to hopefully moving forward on this. Also would like to thank the Town staff, the only time I can really come to mind that was colder was when Glenwood burned down there and that will always stay in my mind. Thank the Town staff for being out in something like that and the leaks and hopefully we're getting ready to correct that here in the near future at least on Main Street. Last thing is just just mainly for town staff and I think I've mentioned to Shane in about for the first time and 40 years. The staff here and your wife also at the college will not be having BlueCross BlueShield managing your insurance Aetna is taken over and hopefully at \$140 million savings. It will keep our insurance down close to what it is right now.

**Pete Gherini**

Yeah, I'd like to echo what Charlie and Doug said about the ambulance thing. I'd also like to recognize one of our local residents who wrote a letter to the Watauga Democrat, and talked about how this issue and this goes way back to Doug here. But the article said that in October 5, 1978, they were talking about this problem with ambulance service in Blowing Rock. That's kind of a lot of years. For people that have been around. I certainly hope that we're going to, at the retreat, really get down and get this problem fixed. There's a lot of talent here that can do that. The Mayor, Shane, Kent, Doug, and others, and so I hope at the retreat, we can, it's been too long. I mean, residents want it fixed. And let's get it fixed. Thank you.

**Charlie Sellers**

If I may, yes, we were talking about the ambulance transport. I would like to say we've had many residents, including Greg King, the BRCA, individual groups, the Chamber everybody has been involved with this. And so thanks to everybody.

## Shane Fox

Thank you, Mayor and Council for taking the time tonight for a good meeting. Good update on the audit and parking. So thank you, everyone participating in tonight's meeting. I'll start by saying an update on the retreat dates, since we're talking about the retreat. So the retreat is set for Monday, January the 30th, Tuesday January 31 and Wednesday February 1st all three days at the American Legion, the plan is to keep hours similar to in the past, which is about 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. So 3, full days are planned at this point. Among many things that we'll talk about, of course will be EMS. Chief Graham will present an update to a PowerPoint that I believe he put together about eight years ago, seven, eight years ago now, that helped land code Creek a station so there'll be an update to that PowerPoint with some of the updated numbers. And they've changed quite drastically to only prove our further prove our point. We will also talk about parking, as Chief Miller mentioned tonight, along with hopefully reviewing the bids for not only Main Street, water and sewer and underground utilities, sidewalk and paving, as well as our park project, Memorial Park project reviewing those bids and our water meters. So the retreat is always three full days, this will be no exception. This may be the full list of all of our retreats or at least in recent memory of data that we have to go over decisions we will be discussing. Again, that's Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, January 30,31 and February the 1 at the American Legion. I'd also like to say in the past month, you approved the replacement of the roof at the wastewater plant that work is being completed this week should be completed tomorrow. Weather permitting, I think we're going to get there tomorrow so that that roof will be replaced, which is fantastic news for them. And again, I mentioned earlier the bids are out for all those projects. So all of our bid documents have been out and are soliciting bids right now whether that's the Main Street project that has five divisions included water, sewer, underground utilities, sidewalk and paving, whether that's our memorial park project, which is out for bids or our water meters. So again, all three of those separate bids will be back prior to the retreat and hopefully we'll use the retreat to go through and discuss the details of those. As said nothing everyone up here. I would thank staff for all the work that they do every day of course we always have individuals that are on duty 24/7 whether that's in police or fire and this time of year public works is almost 24/7 especially during the holidays. We had unfortunate timing in so many ways. We had a wonderful and beautiful quiet Christmas that did lead to some problems. We had the snow that came in slash freeze that been led to the deep freeze that then led to many pipes bursting throughout the town. Luckily, I say luckily only three, I would call mainlines broke during that time. If you watch the news and followed Asheville and others, they could be many more that were out there. So we had one on Main Street, one on Wallingford, and one on New River Estates. Unfortunately, all three happened in the same night. So thank you to Public Works and staff for coming in earlier that day and starting the repair process and finishing it up at about 6am The next morning, so they worked through the night. I believe sub zero temperatures during that timeframe. So just again, thank you to all the staff and all the work that goes into that there's so many things that I can say from a thank you standpoint, police turning off water meters, fire being out dealing with true fires that took place during that time, we did have a structure fire, we did have a number of water damage calls that required the fire departments assistance along with public works of turning off meters, pulling power supplies, etc. So for about three, full days, there was work being done 24/7. In many different facets, a lot of updating through social media. So I'm sure I'm missing individuals other than just simply saying thank you to all the staff for all the work. Unfortunately, it happened during the holidays. Fortunately, we've got a wonderful staff that came in every day during those times and put out, you know, the work

that was needed to get the job done. So thank you to everyone. And that's my conclusion. I'll have been happy to answer any questions. You have questions, guys.

**Doug Matheson**

I would like to add one thing, if I may, about the new committee that's been formed the mayor's meetings and that's meeting almost quarterly now. And it's the mayor's of Blowing Rock, Beach Mountain and Seven Devils are coming together. And meeting so I'd like that's getting started and kicked off.

**Charlie Sellers**

Well, thanks to you because you spearheaded that. Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to take a 10 minute recess. We're going to go into closed session after that there shouldn't be any decisions made from that closed session. Albert, if you read the

**Albert Yount**

well, we're kind of general statute 14331 811 Six. Move we move into

**Charlie Sellers**

take a 10 minute recess and we'll go into closed session. Thanks for joining us tonight.

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

**Charlie Sellers**

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

**Hilari H. Hubner, Town Clerk**

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Tax Releases #2022-06 – Attachment A**
- Budget Amendment #2023-02 – Attachment B**
- Year of the Trail Proclamation – Attachment C**
- 2021 – 2022 Audit Presentation – Attachment D**
- Church Parking Amendment – Attachment E**
- Annexation – Blowing Rock Brewing – Attachment F**