

Town Council Meeting - Tuesday, March 14th, 2023

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

childcare, project, council, proposing, town, eagle scout project, building, employees, bid, bathrooms, boy scouts, approve, planning, cost, question, number, motion, add, replaced, people

SPEAKERS

All, David Harwood, Nicole Norman, Doug Matheson, Doug Chapman, Evan Cutlip, Jennifer Brown, Virginia Powell, Elizabeth Underwood, Shane Fox, Albert Yount, Aaron Miller, Melissa Pickett, Pete Gherini, Charlie Sellers, Ron Cutlip, Kevin Rothrock

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 14, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock, NC. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Doug Matheson and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett and Pete Gherini. Others in attendance were Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, 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

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for attending our Town Council meeting. Roll call for attendance, all present. Council approval of minutes, February 15, 2023 regular and closed session. Do I have a motion?

Pete Gherini

So moved.

Charlie Sellers

Do I have a second.

Melissa Pickett

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion?

David Harwood

Yes. Mr. Mayor, there was one correction on page seven. We've got two seconds instead of a first and a second on the motion we have two seconds.

Charlie Sellers

Who wants to take the first?

David Harwood

I think it was Albert and then I took the second.

All

All in favor.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, thanks David. And then February 28, 2023 special meeting minutes. Motion?

Doug Matheson

I will make a motion.

Charlie Sellers

Do I have a second?

David Harwood

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion? Council how do you vote? Okay on the regular agenda due to some additional things that have come out over the course of the last few days. Council, I'm requesting that we move short term overlay district request that we tabled it until further notice. So, Council can do additional research. Do I have a motion to table that?

All

All in favor.

David Harwood

So moved.

Charlie Sellers

Do I have a second?

Doug Matheson

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion on that?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Ladies and gentlemen, what we just did is under the public hearing section, the short-term overlay district request has been tabled for this meeting. It will not be heard; it will be heard at a later date. Once Council has time to reflect on some additional information. Also, in addition, Council under the regular agenda number four for the Eagle Scout Project. It's been requested we move that to number one. Are you all amenable and acceptable of that?

All

Sure.

Charlie Sellers

Okay so, the Eagle Scout project will be moved from four to one. And the comprehensive plan will follow up from there. So those are the changes to the agenda. Do I have a motion to approve?

Doug Matheson

I make a motion we approve the regular agenda with tabling the overlay district.

Charlie Sellers

So, we have a motion to approve the changes to the regular agenda. Do we have a second?

Albert Yount

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion? Council how do you vote?

All

All in favor.

Charlie Sellers

Consent agenda; tax releases, 2022-08, tax refundm2022-03, tax advertisement request, budget amendment 2023-07. Do I have a motion to approve the consent agenda?

Pete Gherini

So moved.

Charlie Sellers

Do I have a second.

Melissa Pickett

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, no discussion on the Consent Agenda. Council how do you vote?

All

All in favor.

Charlie Sellers

Consent agenda is approved. Moving right along we have our public comments section. If anybody would like to speak from the audience, please give your name to Hilari and what you would like to speak on. So far, we have Virginia Powell. Ms. Powell would you'd like to step up to the podium? She looks familiar guys. Would you give us your address, please?

Virginia Powell

Hey, I'm Virginia Powell, we live at 255 Country Club Lane. I'm just up here really quick for you guys to plant a little seed. Out in the community, we have people signing up to go to several restaurants and their gaming it if they have a big group of people, and they sign up on their phones to go to several restaurants and whichever one they get to, then they spread out on Main Street and go to that one first. And they don't tell the restaurants that they went to that restaurant, as you all know, I'm a realtor. And a lot of restaurants are for sale right now. So just if you guys would consider food trucks. I know we talked about this when I was on Council, and it might be time to look at that ordinance again and do a temporary lifting of it. I'm not sure what the right words are. But when the Town is really busy, we just don't have the restaurants like we normally do and going into the season. If we can be proactive and maybe some entrepreneurs can come and be here on busy times, not on times that would take away from our restaurants that are struggling right now. But that's all I have to say. I hope you think about it and consider it going into the season.

Pete Gherini

Thanks Virginia.

Virginia Powell

Thanks.

Charlie Sellers

Thank you Virginia. I'm sure moving forward that's something that is going to be brought up more and more. Alright this is a presentation New River Conservancy update on stream restoration. The director, Katie Logan, Katie, how are you? Good to see you. Yes, if you wouldn't please step up. podium and Shane's going to give you the controls. Thanks for coming.

Elizabeth Underwood

Elizabeth Underwood and Katie Krogmeier gave an update on the New River Conservancy stream restoration project.

Ron Cutlip

Thank you, very good presentation. I tell you between this group and Wendy and her group, and all the other conservancy group it's amazing what they've been able to achieve. Thank you so much. All right, moving right along, Blowing Rock Academy CUP 2023-02. I'll turn this over to Mr. Kevin Rothrock.

Kevin Rothrock

Good evening Mayor and Council. This is a special use permit being quasi-judicial anyone who wants to speak needs to be sworn in. Mayor and Council, first I'll read the staff report and then Shane will do a presentation for you. The Town of Blowing Rock is requesting a special use permit to create a daycare center in the Community Club Building, located at 108 Lakeside Drive. The property is currently being used for occasional community events, the property is .219 acres and is Zoned R15 single family. The Town's requesting this special use permit to locate a daycare there, formerly the Ruritan Building and based on the available space between the building and the property line on the south side and the rear of the building a small deck may be added for access to the lower level the ground level. The purpose of the request is to provide daycare services to Town employees. The predominant age bracket for the daycare is from birth and infant to school age. And due to the size of the building the town anticipates not more than 10 children at any one time being kept in daycare facility but could potentially be up to 20. The Watauga County Health and Human Services Department would determine the maximum number of children and the various state requirements for the daycare facilities. There's no parking directly on the property. But there is parking at the pool parking lot and at the gravel. Parking would be mainly for the childcare workers and the drop off and pickup would be at the pool parking area. This went to Planning Board in February and at that meeting, the planning board made a recommendation to approve a special use permit in your packet is a draft special use permit for your review. And then in the packet was also an aerial site plan and a view from the street. Now that site plan showed property lines being through the middle of the building, and that's not accurate. We did have the property surveyed and the corners have been located. But the surveyor is still preparing a final survey plat for us. So we can determine at what length we can provide a deck on the south side and also maybe in the rear. So any questions of me at this time?

David Harwood

Are there any variances requested?

Kevin Rothrock

No.

Doug Matheson

You don't think there will be one once you've got the property lines marked with what the deck's gonna need?

Kevin Rothrock

No, we'll be in good shape, it won't be very wide, it might be a six to eight feet access deck or a way to get down on the south side. But that was just initial understanding of where the property lines were when the surveyor was out there. Now that we've got some room to do something.

Pete Gherini

If we were to approve this, Shane, you mentioned there was some timelines with state approvals and things like that. Would you review those please?

Shane Fox

I certainly will, if it's okay, I've got it in the presentation.

Pete Gherini

Oh, okay.

Shane Fox

Yes, we can. Okay, my presentation towards the end of next steps.

Pete Gherini

Yes. Okay. Perfect.

Albert Yount

You will be addressing who and how much right.

Shane Fox

Correct.

Kevin Rothrock

And John Warren the building inspector is here if you have questions that come up about the building.

David Harwood

Did notices go out to the neighbors?

Kevin Rothrock

They did and the property was posted in the paper too.

David Harwood

Thank you.

Charlie Sellers

Council. Thank you Kevin, Mr. Fox.

Shane Fox

Thank you, Council for allowing me to speak tonight as an applicant for this special use permit. So, this is definitely a first, in my tenure here. We've labeled this Blowing Rock Academy. So, it's a fancy term

that we're using to name our potential Child Development Center. I do have a PowerPoint presentation to go over tonight. Feel free to stop me at any point and ask questions as we go through our Blowing Rock Academy outline. First, we'll start with a statement on childcare. We will then go on to discussing some issues with childcare, most notably the lack of childcare within Watauga County and the cost of childcare. And then what can we do, which gets us to the Blowing Rock Academy and the benefits of the Blowing Rock Academy and then an outline and what next steps look like if we were to approve this tonight and move forward with adopting the Blowing Rock Academy option. Childcare is a business issue, COVID-19 exposed the previous invisible or forgotten link between childcare and the economy. All employees must step up and make childcare a priority to retain and recruit employees. This is based on an article from 2022 of the Harvard Business Review. We have needs here, you all know what I'm speaking of. We have a number of children that are brought to work on a daily basis because of lack of childcare, even childcare that is nonexistent because of the lack of childcare that's happened during COVID. And so we'll go through some unfortunate issues that Watauga County has in regard to childcare with really regards to two main issues, lack of childcare, no spots. And we'll talk some numbers in just a few moments of what that looks like nationally within the state and then the cost of quality childcare. So, if you can find a spot or a slot or whatever term you use for your child, the sheer cost of that is astronomical. Again, we'll talk about what that looks like from a statewide and then again here in Watauga County, along with our proposition to the Blowing Rock Academy. Let's start with lack of childcare, I put some articles here I won't go through and read each one, I just wanted to put some recent articles, I think anytime anymore, especially with me, maybe it's my ears are more attuned to it as I flip TV or open up the newspaper you see an article with regards to childcare and childcare issues. Here are just a few of the most recent headlines that I picked out from New York Times, ABC News and CNN all dealing with childcare and lack of childcare issues, especially since the pandemic took place. Here's a recent study that was put out by the reading nation 8,000 parents were survey and again reading through some of these percentages of the parents that were surveyed and the outcomes unfortunately because of childcare issues. 23% said they had been fired because of childcare problems, 26% said they had to quit a job over childcare issues, 37% of they had their pay or hours reduced because of childcare and 41% said they turned down a job offer due to childcare concerns. Again, 8,000 parents interviewed for this study in 2022 by Reading Nation. Overall economic losses, the call of the underpowered childcare industry is at \$122 billion based on the study in 2022. Three and a half of that in North Carolina. I did put in here, prior to COVID, that number was \$57 billion. You see the difference there between \$57 and \$122, just in about a three-year span. Unfortunately, that's the economic impact because of the lack of childcare. Locally, Watauga County has approximately 2,000 children under the age of five, but only 659 total spots that's including private that are registered in home, and our commercial center. So, you see the difference there are over 1,300 children, that are finding ways whether that's with mom and dad or guardians or grandparents or neighbors or whoever. Over 250 currently in Watauga County are on the waiting list. Some of those waiting lists are over two years. We have four employees right now that either have infants or are pregnant, that are on waiting lists, that are in excess of two years. So, this is a real problem that exists currently within our Town with our Town employees. If you are able to get a spot, if you're able to luck up and plan ahead a year or two into the future and find a slot for your child that's maybe yet to be born. The cost of quality childcare was pretty staggering to me as we went through and looked at some of these numbers and talk to you all at the retreat about childcare. Childcare is one of the biggest expenses that families face, so one of the biggest. Infant childcare in North Carolina costs \$2,125 or 28.9% more than in state tuition for four-

year public college. And we'll talk about Appalachian just a few moments to give you something that kind of hits locally. That makes North Carolina one of the 33 states and DC where infant care is more expensive than college. North Carolina infant care costs just 8.6% less than average rent that's based on 2022 data. The average annual infant care cost in the North Carolina is \$9,480. That's \$790 per month, Watauga is a little bit more than \$800, which averages out to \$9,600 per year. If you have a teenager or a child or someone that you're sending to school with yourself through Appalachian State tuition and fees \$8,152 for that same timeframe. So, it is cheaper to send yourself or someone through college, tuition and fees, than it is for childcare in Watauga County. That to me was pretty staggering, I did not realize the cost of childcare. So, what can we do to exist? I put here think outside the box, which is the Blowing Rock Academy and what I'm presenting to you today. Why Blowing Rock Academy; listing of things here that I believe will have instant impacts, starting with retention of current employees, providing a peace of mind, having the children here on site - we're proposing the community center. We say that's on site, that's here within the Town so in walking distance, within lunch distance, within break distance or nursing distance or whatever you want to call it. We think it will boost morale and increase productivity and higher quality of work and having the peace of mind of having a child here. Decrease in absentee, this is something that's big that I put in here. I shared with you during the retreat there is studies across studies that have quality childcare or reduced absentee issues that often parents face because of childcare issues. Encourage families, we say here we're family and we encourage families to be first, we believe that through conversations with potential employees that participate in this would very well maybe increase their family size, given the cost factor and the ability to have onsite daycare, smooth transition over after maternity leave something that we're dealing with right now on several instances with mothers that are out on maternity leave. And this would make for a smoother transition, again for being on site and having the peace of mind of having a child here with individuals that would be employees of the town. And then overall, as we go through and talk about the cost that we're proposing, that would relieve the financial burden that would potentially be there if they were paying some of the fees that we talked about just a few moments ago. And consecutively recruitment of employees, we do think this will be a potential game changer and set us apart. We are fortunate as I shared with you during the retreat to have a full staff right now, we do have a new position that we have posted for our assistant finance position, but that's a new position. We are fully staffed. We've had no turnover this past year. I think we're doing some good things. We think this will help with that. And also help us within the labor pool recruiting some unique and great individuals into the Town of Blowing Rock. So, an outline. We are discussing this and proposing this for full time employees, children within the home and full-time employees. So, we do have a couple of instances of young children that are living in the home of grandparents. So, we are proposing this for children within the home full time employees and not for the public. So, I know that's been discussed or rumored out in the public. We're not proposing this and would not ever propose this to be an open for the public entity. This would be just for our employees and children's children within the home of those employees. Parks and Rec, our actual summer camp, I said examples of success, we've had nothing but success as an example, we don't think this would be anything different. Other than success, our after-school program and summer camp program are tremendous. We have a waiting list for both of them. Most of the time they fill up before they ever go to the public, with returning individuals and siblings, etc., that find their way back into our program. So, we have a building success example, within our actual program and summer camp program. We think this would just build on to that success, we are predicting or proposing, I should say the location as the community building, I've got some pictures and

few moments and a diagram of what we do need to do to that building. I put here underutilized, we are unfortunately only receiving about \$2,000 a year, I put here \$2,150 on average for rent. So, it is an underutilized building unfortunately most of the time. And our hours that we are proposing for this are 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. We are planning on starting with two full time employees, one would be considered a director which is required to be on site and then another full-time staff, with one part time staff. We are planning on starting with up to ten children, our current ratio is one to five. So, it would allow us to do that with the two full time individuals. And we could have up to 20 as Mr. Rothrock spoke earlier based on the square footage. So, the state will dictate everything that we do here, as we talked earlier, or as I think you were asking the earlier some of the requirements there the State Health and Human Services Child Development Center Division dictates everything that we do here from square footage requirements, outdoor space, etc. So, we would not be able to grow any further than what they would allow for us to grow. You've heard the stars program; a one star, two-star, three star, four star, five star program. Those are really based on three criteria, the program standards, which is essentially a curriculum as you would have within a school system, educational standards, those are mostly with the teachers that you're hiring, and then the environment itself, so the building itself. We want to do this the right way. So, our proposal is to number one, get the environment, the building up to the highest standards that's required to help get points towards the star system. Number two, we would propose hiring individuals that have accreditation individuals that have a degree that would allow us again to move a couple steps up on the platform. And then we would propose, as Ms. Pickett spoke during the retreat of having a full curriculum from babies all the way up to our preschool that would again, we believe allow us to start very high on this list, a three-star four-star program. What that does is several things we'll get into the monthly cost here in just a few moments. A star system does allow you to potentially go after federal and state money that would be available to us. So, we put here under the grant section, Stabilization Grant, Child Care Development Block Grant, Smart Star, I put the general assembly because we're hoping that we're going to be creative enough and new enough that perhaps the General Assembly would like to tag team or something moving forward with offsetting some of the cost as a pilot program. Our cost, back to the top as of right now proposed at \$400 per month, which is roughly 50% of the market rate that I shared with you earlier. Overall, the expense, we believe will be a negative expense to the Town of about \$70,000 to \$80,000 annually. Again, that's a projection based on the current numbers I put here, we currently spend about a million dollars on our employees and benefits. So, we're adding to that million dollars that we do. Our benefits in my opinion, are why we have some of the employees that we have and the tenured employees that we have. Most of that million dollars are spent on insurance and retirement things of that nature. We feel like this will be an addition to that that would help us again with retention and potentially recruitment. Our community building does have some needs, these needs are dictated by the state. So we have had several visits within our last few weeks over our community building with state representatives that have required a certain number of things potentially, to be done to our community building things like lattice on the back porch, they frown upon children wandering off and hiding under crawl spaces, a fence around the play area, it just has to be a 42 inch fence, I believe around the play area and the HVAC system again. We do have to have direct access from the inside of the building to the play area for both areas. You'll see in a few moments we're projecting to divide or proposing to divide the room up and so we have to take a window out put a door in two different sections to allow easy access and direct access from both of those areas. A new outdoor porch, Mr. Rothrock spoke, that's really a platform. And again, in just a few moments, I'll go through and show you a diagram of what we're proposing here. Hand washing sinks,

as we have found, are very crucial in obtaining especially those points and the star system, having many, many hand washing stations for the toddlers and the children and the teachers will be something that we have to have. And then again, that interior wall to separate the toddlers and infants, upfront costs, \$50,000 to \$60,000 are our projections. We have received some quotes. And we are planning on potentially doing some of this work ourselves. Here's our community building, you all know what it looks like there is an outside picture looking forward. Here is a back area. And I'll show you this is the area where we're proposing a door and a porch similar size, extending it out what this looks like. Our property line is essentially this wall continues down through here. Here's the other side, were proposing to enclose from this corner out and down with a fence that would come back this direction, and then come back. And our second door would be at this window with a platform that would come down from the building and allow access. Here's an interior picture, what it looks like, most days, it's a big open room that does have restroom facilities, back in this area, there's two restroom facilities. So based on the requirements at the state level, here is a beautiful drawing that was done by our Parks and Rec staff. And what we're proposing so we'll go back and look here is the interior picture and here is our not professionally done as our architect on the Council probably noticed at this point. Here we are proposing a wall that would be in this area that would connect over. So, let's go back. So, we're, we're looking at a wall that would go here to that right here and leave this big area open for what we would call our toddler and preschool room. And this smaller room would be infants, infants do not require as much square footage as what your toddlers do. Here is what I was proposing as being a new door and ramp, the same back here. On our back window, this window right here. So, this window would become a door, and that window would become a door. We are in need of adding some sinks in here off of what is our storage room right now this holds our tables, this would be considered what we would call an office area. So that is an overview of my presentation. And I'm sure you have plenty of questions to ask. I can walk you even further through the diagram here. I would be happy to answer questions.

Doug Matheson

Two things on the diagram, one, do we not have to have a water fountain? And two I think they still require tempering valves on the hot water on your sinks if I am not mistaken.

Shane Fox

Yes, sir, to the hot water no to the water fountain. And that is part of our list.

Pete Gherini

So, Shane back to the state approval, what kind of timeframe do you expect the state to take to approve this?

Shane Fox

So, we've begun, at least what is needed at this point with starting the process. So, the building is really the biggest piece and it's probably the most time-consuming piece of this, we do think this part will take we'll say up to two months for us to get through. Maybe not consistently, but just based on the contractor's timeline. Our proposal would be to have this open around the first or middle of July. So that is several months from now, that would give us plenty of time to get the work completed that's needed here behind me along with the hiring and training of the individuals. We have been contacted by several individuals that would be interested in potentially participating as employees for this that would come

with certifications that are needed and the education needed for us to get them up and running pretty quickly. But our proposal as it stands right now, we'll say around the middle of July, second or third week of July is when we would hope to have doors open to the employees.

Pete Gherini

Okay.

David Harwood

Are you are you going to get in deeper into the financial piece of it?

Shane Fox

Can we just go back a couple of slides?

David Harwood

I can.

Shane Fox

Yes, we certainly can. So, what we're proposing is a 50% of market rate. So, as I showed earlier, Watauga County averages \$800 per month. So, we're proposing a 50% rate to lessen that cost burden that would be on the employees if they were in the free market that was out, if they had a slot. We believe based on our needs, which would be the two employees and the part time employee, along with some overhead cost, utility cost, our annual negative cost. So essentially, a loss would be between \$70,000 and \$80,000.

David Harwood

A gap?

Shane Fox

Yes, a gap to be able to fill. The more children, so there is a breakeven that happens somewhere around 25, we would never be at 25, not in this facility. Until you get to that point, there is a gap that has to take place. That's why I was beaming it as a benefit, it is not a cost or a profit. The ability to make a profit comes with a higher number that I don't think that we would have, unless we would have a partner with another entity, as in the Town of Boone or Watauga County, there has been some early on conversations about us getting this up and running. And I think an opportunity that could exist later down the road if we choose to do so with partnering with another entity. This issue, as some of you have been aware of and attended some classes and some of the things is not only a Blowing Rock issue, as I've shared it is a Watauga County, North Carolina, in the country. So, I do think we are maybe being trendsetters here, hopefully, and putting some motivation out there for others to either do it on their own or potentially join with us to do something more in the future. But unfortunately, until you get a little bit higher, the breakeven doesn't happen. So, this would be a negative cost to the Town.

Charlie Sellers

And it's a benefit.

Shane Fox

It is a benefit.

David Harwood

On paper I think it is, but I don't think it's a benefit.

Shane Fox

I will add that, you know, retaining one employee or recruiting one employee is somewhere in that neighborhood as well from a cost of hiring, training, etc., recruiting. So, it, I will not say that it's a wash, but it's a significant cost to us to lose employees or have to recruit employees, especially in certain areas and certain skill sets. Let's go back two more slides, I think. Okay.

Doug Matheson

Back to the retention part. Just to make sure that everybody understands it too we're talking about this being a benefit that we're not having any problems with the retention. We're not having any problems with absentees and a lot of the problems mentioned there now are we?

Shane Fox

We are not so we have a very open policy now that allows children to come to work if need be because of lack of childcare. We are very family friendly here. I think as you all know if you show up on any given day, that may very well be the case. So, we have encouraged that to be the case here and the culture here to allow those individuals to feel like they can come to work and do their duties. So we're not having those issues. But I think that's in direct relation to our policy and our openness towards allowing children to be present if need be.

Charlie Sellers

Council. Thank you Shane, now this is open for public hearing. If someone would like to speak on this please see Ms. Hilari and be sworn in. Okay. Do I have a motion to close this public hearing?

Albert Yount

So moved.

Pete Gherini

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any further discussion?

All

All in favor of closing the public hearing.

Albert Yount

So, moved.

Charlie Sellers

All right, do we have a motion to approve this program?

Melissa Pickett

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion?

Pete Gherini

Just thanks to Shane and everybody that worked on putting this together. I think as you've stated the benefit of keeping employees and the retraining if you had to hire new people, maybe there's some upfront costs but over the term I think it's it's a great deal. So, thank you.

Shane Fox

Thank you.

Albert Yount

This is huge, it's wonderful.

All

We have a first and second, Council? All in favor of the motion.

Shane Fox

Thank you all.

Charlie Sellers

Moving right along and thanks again to Shane, Jennifer, Kevin. All those who put time into this. Like Pete said this is I think a great benefit. I really do. And Pete they will be looking for volunteers down there and I can't work, I'm too short, but you can.

Pete Gherini

My plate is full Charlie. Thank you.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, during the agenda change, we move the Eagle Scout up to number one. This is Mr. Evan Cutlip. Mr. Cutlip, could you please step forward and thank you for coming.

Evan Cutlip

Thank you for having me, Town Council and thanks, everybody, for coming. My name is Evan Cutlip. And I'm here to try to approve my Eagle Scout project, which is just a small little bike track that goes off into some bushes by Davant Field. What is an Eagle Scout project, an Eagle Scout project is what a Life Scout has to do to finish Eagle. To get to Eagle the scout has to do a project that helps the community in some way. So that's what an Eagle Scout project is. What is my project, my Eagle Scout

project is going to be building a small bike track or pump track by Davant Field in Blowing Rock. Where? I plan on planning on doing my pump track at Davant Field in an open space. Not only to provide room for bikers, but also to clear out some of the overgrown trees in the area. This is also a great location because the nearest bike track is 30 minutes away and we don't have one in town. This will also be a new recreational feature for the Town of Blowing Rock. Why? I decided to do this project because I have been planning on doing this for my Eagle Scout project ever since I started thinking about Eagle almost three years ago whenever I joined Boy Scouts. How? I'm planning on executing this project by instructing thoroughly detailed directions images and designs to all of the workers and Boy Scouts. I also will have strict safety guidelines. And will make sure to keep all the heavy equipment not only away from all of the young scouts but just scouts in general by having them separated on different days of the week. So, I'm going to be making sure that everybody's safe by not only separating them from distance but also days and time. With the help of my Eagle Scout project team coach Ron Cutlip, which is my dad, he's a landscape architect, he will oversee the planning and construction phases of the project with me, this will allow for a safe and successful project. When? Our plan is to do it in the month of April. I'm working on getting a date where all the Boy Scouts can help with the project. This is an image of the site right above the bleachers off into the woods.

Charlie Sellers

Would that be over to your left?

Evan Cutlip

Yes, it would be over to the left. It'd be right in here and all through here. Because that's just overground. Maintenance, the maintenance of this plan is not as difficult as it might seem with the only maintenance being once or twice a year depending on whether of upkeep by the Boy Scouts. I'm planning on getting a date that the Boy Scouts can work on the project once a year as service hours to do with the reshaping of the jumps. So, the only maintenance would be the reshaping of the jumps. The only other thing that we would need is a mower around the edges not on the track, which the town already has a mower and mows. And this is my design. So, I was going to think about putting small little berm here along with just some lumps and jumps, I have all the exact measurements. This is about 62 feet across about 25 feet up. And then another little berm here not that not that big of a berm. These are all small jumps, that will go maybe like, like a foot high, not that high, so nobody gets that hurt on them. And then we plan on taking this trail up into the woods around the tree, with it being about 12 feet wide, up through here, still probably about 10 feet from the road. Come around here, we're thinking about putting some logs in here, along with down here. And then there's going to be there's a river here. So, I was planning on making a bridge, but I don't know how that would be with the safety. But I was planning on making a bridge here that comes down and leads into the track. And then another trail that goes through here at like a zigzag design, that comes down. That's kind of it, any questions? Yes.

Charlie Sellers

Okay. Council.

Doug Matheson

I got a couple on the barriers; I heard him say 10 foot close to the road at the top?

Ron Cutlip

Yeah, there's that elevation change in the roads up here. And we'll probably have to put some kind of fence along that. I am Ron, Evan's dad. Yeah, that area up in there, you know, the roads here and it kind of drops, there's a big elevation change. And so probably what we would do is run a fence somewhere from that bathroom facility along the upper edge so people couldn't go either way, you know, just for safety purposes.

Doug Matheson

And same with the bottom next to the walking track.

Ron Cutlip

Yeah, there will probably have to be some kind of fencing in here. So that when people are walking or whatever, that there will be a barrier, a safety barrier. In fact, this might just actually be pushed up a little more like that, more compact. And this is like a drainage creek. It runs under the road. It kind of disappears in a pipe somewhere in here. But it does have running water.

Pete Gherini

Shane, while the scouts and volunteers are working on this. What about insurance coverage? Could you talk about that?

Shane Fox

Let me ask if Jennifer Brown can come in just for a few moments. I think she's handled the details there. So, it's probably best for her answer.

David Harwood

Evan, did you draw this?

Evan Cutlip

Yes, sir I did.

Jennifer Brown

I had Nicole reach out to our insurance company. Nicole, do you remember the number off the top of your head?

Nicole Norman

So, she didn't give us a number. She just said some specifications to make sure that we have in place, a certificate of insurance as additional insured coverage.

Shane Fox

Our insurance company, the League of Municipalities would require for the contractor, the Boy Scouts or whoever to provide to us, like typical, their cover of insurance and their policy that we would hold during the project.

Charlie Sellers

So, we'd be carried as additional insured on the policy, their policy.

Pete Gherini

Thank you.

Evan Cutlip

Any other questions?

Albert Yount

Are you going to have to take out all the rhododendrons?

Evan Cutlip

No, just around the track and just gonna cut them. I'm not gonna take them out of the ground unless they're directly in the way but we have chainsaws and stuff.

Albert Yount

Funding?

Evan Cutlip

So money wise we wouldn't really need anything. My dad's an architect, so he has a lot of people locally that do soil and stuff, donate to the Boy Scouts. And we could get donations. And also, it's mainly donations of the rock the dirt, and with the dirt that we would dig out the top for the trails we could also use that.

Charlie Sellers

I will have to say, Council, when I first moved back to Blowing Rock full time, I got involved with Evan's dad, with the building the playground at school, and you donate all your time, plus some. So, thank you for that. So, I will say that.

Ron Cutlip

Thank you. I believe that on our initial email, did we not send that kind of a breakdown of materials and equipment? Do they have that in their packet?

Jennifer Brown

No.

Ron Cutlip

Okay, so for his Eagle Scout application, he had to list all the materials and quantities. Who was going to potentially donate that? And what equipment and tools? And then how he was going to organize his implementation with the scouts and the volunteer labor? I can put in I mean, as far as costs go, Evan's, right. I mean, I have a lot of connections as a landscape architect. And I will call in those favors.

Melissa Pickett

So, after the project is complete, the only maintenance costs to the town will be the mowing, which is already being done now is that what I'm understanding?

Evan Cutlip

Yes, the Boy Scouts would have the rest covered, because we're always looking for more service hours. And the more of those, the better. And we can 100% implement a day of the year where the boys come and help revamp the stuff that overground and stuff like that.

Ron Cutlip

The trail will need to be pruned twice a year, maybe once in the spring, maybe once in the fall.

David Harwood

What's the life expectancy of the trail?

Evan Cutlip

Probably as long as the Boy Scouts are taking care of it, probably 30 years or so. I'm not really sure though. I would say 10 to 30 years, depending on how people write it in if there's people that are like, set out to destroy it, which there may be people like that, I don't know.

Doug Matheson

These hard rains we get won't rut it.

Ron Cutlip

What we had planned on doing is we're going to obviously bring in the soil to create the mounds and the bumps in the trails. And then we were going to work with Vulcan Materials to get the crusher run to then place actually on where the bike tires go.

Evan Cutlip

And we're gonna compound some different dirt with some stone and have a compactor to compact it. So, the rain shouldn't be an issue.

Ron Cutlip

Then it will be grass seeded, sod is out of our budget.

Pete Gherini

Jennifer, will there be an outreach to the community saying there is an opportunity to support this?

Jennifer Brown

We can absolutely do that for sure. This will not be our first Eagle Scout project that we have done either. We've had several other Eagle Scouts who have done different things throughout our park system.

Pete Gherini

I think it could be a great idea. There are probably people out there that would write some checks.

Jennifer Brown

It would also probably get some bicycles off the new playground's surface and playground area.

Melissa Pickett

Yes.

David Harwood

So, who's going to police this? And by that, I mean, well, it's a fair question. I mean, right now, I see the challenges that we have policing and scheduling, other park amenities, tennis courts, pickleball courts, things of that nature. I mean, who's gonna police this?

Jennifer Brown

In my opinion, I think this is more of a, you get off of school, or it's a pretty day and your kid wants to ride their bike you take them to ride their bike. If it becomes a problem, then that's something that we would have to deal with. But I don't know that it necessarily has to, more than one person can ride am I correct?

Evan Cutlip

Oh, yeah. Probably like up to like four or five at a time. I mean, probably more than that. Actually. Probably like, 10. I mean; just however many are there at a given time. What do you mean by policing it?

David Harwood

Well, I'm sure there's a maximum.

Evan Cutlip

Oh, policing, how many people are on it.

David Harwood

Policing how many people are on it, when people can be on it, who's going to get people off of it when they're not supposed to be on it?

Evan Cutlip

I was kind of thinking my mindset was something like Rocky Knob that just doesn't really have a police amount of people that are gonna be on it. Although I'm not sure if that's different with different places in this county. But I didn't think through the policing part.

Ron Cutlip

Generally, at Rocky Knob, there's always a parent or two around that do some enforcing. And that's how they kind of do it there. I mean, yeah, just like when your kids on the playground, your kind of watching your kid.

Evan Cutlip

Yeah, and with the different trails going up through here, this would probably take like five minutes to ride up and down. Or maybe like three minutes or something like that. So I feel like the amount of people we could have on this? I don't think it would overpopulate. But if it did, I'm not sure about that part.

Ron Cutlip

But one thing we could do is make sure that we work with the police department, I guess, to make sure there's clear sightlines that when they're driving by it, you can see in there, so if there's clear sightlines and stuff, that too, is a good way of knowing what's going on.

Jennifer Brown

I think we can also probably talk to Thomas and potentially add a security camera down there if we need to do from the bathroom side when we're adding the other stuff.

Charlie Sellers

I do have a question, Council. And don't get me wrong, I think it's a great idea. My hat's off to you for your hard work and your ingenuity. If a child is riding their bicycle, and they fall and break their leg, and they are on town property, who's liable?

Jennifer Brown

To me, I will see it no different than when they go out on the playground come down the slide and break something.

Charlie Sellers

Ok.

Shane Fox

I would add, we've not discussed this, but I do think proper signage would be required as well. So I'm sure that something we can work out with ground rules, open and closed type of thing, whether that's dusk to dawn, etc., along with our typical signage that we add, that is added to our playground and others that is a play at your own risk type of language. I think that's probably appropriate it would be for us to add.

Charlie Sellers

It would be good for Evan to come up with that information and submit it to Shane.

Shane Fox

I think I do think we need to get some stipulations of age hours etc. that we could provide to you all to provide signage.

Ron Cutlip

Indeed, it does need to be fenced off, you know, that we talked about we're gonna have fencing at the top and fenced off at the bottom so when the time comes and whatever time that is, I don't know how that works, but let's say it's dusk the gates shut and locked. You know.

Doug Matheson

That would be only two things that I would ask on it is that we do at highway side and walkway side have some type of safety barrier there.

David Harwood

Evan, when you say the Boy Scouts will maintain this, are you referring to your troop?

Ron Cutlip

I agree.

Evan Cutlip

Yes, yes, sir we have over 40 people in our troop. The amount of people that could maintain this would probably be like, probably 30 people, like once or twice a year,

David Harwood

Your troop is in?

Evan Cutlip

Oh, yeah to move up in scouting, you have to have service hours. So, people would feel like, if they didn't want to do it, they'd have to do it.

Ron Cutlip

You have to have service hours all the way through service hours at each rank.

Evan Cutlip

That's why a lot of people don't advance because they don't have the opportunity to do service hours, because there's only certain places certain times to do service hours.

David Harwood

Your trip is based in Boone correct.

Evan Cutlip

Yes.

Jennifer Brown

The reason why is Blowing Rock doesn't have a troop any longer. So, they have combined the kids with Boone's troop.

Ron Cutlip

Evan's in eighth grade at Blowing Rock and been in Cub Scouts all the way through, unfortunately, when COVID hit and all that the Boy Scout troop here is no more in Blowing Rock. And hopefully one day it will be again.

Evan Cutlip

You probably still have like 5 to 10 people from Blowing Rock School that go to the Boy Scouts in Boone that I am at.

Charlie Sellers

So how many of your associates would use this park for bicycles?

Evan Cutlip

My friends?

Charlie Sellers

Your friends.

Evan Cutlip

Oh, my personal friends? Probably at least 5.

David Harwood

Does Parks and Rec have an opinion of this?

Jennifer Brown

He came to me and approached me about this. And we discussed different areas and options and the area that he is chosen. I mean, it is very overgrown right now. There are pretty rhododendrons like Albert said and I think if we can keep some of those, I think it's a good place to clean up and also give the kids an opportunity to ride their bikes in a safer place.

Charlie Sellers

Council?

Albert Yount

One observation and one question. Evan is not going to have to go through life being a wallflower. Is there a maximum age to ride?

Kevin Rothrock

You want to ride? Council can go out and ride the trails.

Shane Fox

We should talk to our risk management.

Ron Cutlip

I think we would have to get with the Parks and Recreation Department on that.

Evan Cutlip

Another thing, now that I think about it, for the policing how many people we can just have signed that would definitely help. There will probably be people that don't follow the sign, but we always know that

there will be people that don't follow the sign. Well, I hope we think that I'm not sure anymore. But I know a sign would help, at least a little bit.

Doug Matheson

I think, like you we're talking about Rocky Knob most police themselves.

Evan Cutlip

Yeah, that's what they do.

Melissa Pickett

They are pretty good about doing that and trying not to overcrowd.

Evan Cutlip

Because then it's not even fun.

Charlie Sellers

We good? Anybody want to make a motion.

Pete Gherini

I'll make a motion to approve.

Albert Yount

Second.

Charlie Sellers

We have a second any further discussion.

All

All in favor of the motion.

Pete Gherini

Thank you very much.

Charlie Sellers

It's impressive to see young people doing things like this. This is great. Coming up next the comprehension plan bid approval.

Kevin Rothrock

Mayor and Council staff sent out an RFP request for proposal for comprehensive planning consulting services in January 2023. And the Town received a proposal from Benchmark Planning in the amount of \$88,200. The proposal is attached as well as the agreement for services. Funds are set aside in this year's budget for \$50,000, and staff will be requesting the remaining \$38,200 for the remainder of the contract in the budget 23-24. Staff recommends moving forward in contract with Benchmark as they've got a history of service with the Town. Benchmark completed the 2014 Comprehensive Plan update,

consulted and rewrote the sign ordinance in 2018 and assisted with the 321-visioning study in 2019. The scope of services and attachment A, the service agreement provides an outline for the comprehensive plan process. Briefly, initiation begins in March of this year, this month, background research in March and April, initial public comment in May preparation of the draft plan in June through September. More public input in September and October, and then preparation and presentation of the final plan in November through January. Our request is that you approve the service agreement presented before you and then also appoint two members of Council to serve on the steering committee for the comprehensive plan.

Charlie Sellers

Council, what are your thoughts?

Pete Gherini

I'll say that Benchmark did a great job on 321. I was chairman of the planning board working with Kevin and citizens, people from all over and I thought their methodology and how they put things together in the public hearing they had a vote so that people could say yay or nay. And so, I found them to be really good people and would recommend that we use them.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, what we'll do is we'll approve this and then the Council will need to approve two individuals to be on the steering committee. Okay. Does someone want to make a motion?

Doug Matheson

I make a motion that would go with Benchmark and proceed with it.

Pete Gherini

I'll second it.

Charlie Sellers

Ok we have a first and second. Any further discussion?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Okay now who do you want on the steering committee? I'll be more than happy to jump in, because I know everybody's got their plates full.

Doug Matheson

I can. Anybody else? I sat on the last one 14 years ago.

Charlie Sellers

Alright, are you okay with that?

David Harwood

Okay.

Charlie Sellers

You want in?

Doug Matheson

That's fine.

Charlie Sellers

You okay with the two of us?

Kevin Rothrock

Absolutely.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, motion to approve Doug and myself?

Pete Gherini

So, moved.

Charlie Sellers

Second?

David Harwood

I will Second.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, thank you. We're also seeking membership on the subcommittee or steering committee from our Planning Board. Okay excellent. Thank you Kevin. Thanks, Kevin. Thanks for all your hard work. Okay, Main Street water, sewer, sidewalk bid approval. Doug Chapman.

Doug Chapman

Thank you, Mayor, and Council. As we discussed, the Town is working hard to do a Main Street Infrastructure Project. That project includes replacing the water line all the way through Main Street; that was funded by state earmark, replacing a section of sewer line in the central business district. We'll say from Park Avenue to Pine Street, just almost to Chestnut; that's also funded by state earmark. The next section was the North Main sidewalk, which goes from where the Bass Lake sidewalk stopped there on the other side of Speckled Trout down to Hill Street, the second side of Hill Street that is. With that being proposed to be funded by the GO Bond funds. The underground utilities, duct banks were part of that bid. That part hasn't been funded yet so that part is on hold. Also, the paving of the street, milling Main Street and paving it from one end to the other will be on hold until the Town has a funding agreement with the NCDOT to pay for that. Originally that was the expectation is that DOT would pay for that. We just don't have a municipal agreement in place to pay for that. So, we wouldn't be awarding

that part of the project at this point. So, the waterline project extends from basically one end of Main Street to the other, to replace that whole section of eight-inch water line that's had many breaks over the years. I don't know if Matt kept counting, if you counted notches on a shovel, the shovel broken into I would guess. But hopefully we're not too far off from that being replaced in some of that is the oldest section of waterline in Blowing Rock, by far. So, we had the sewer in two segments there in the original project just had the sewer line right here in the central business district to be replaced. That was all that was originally what we asked for in the funding. There's a section of 18 inch sewer that is in Main Street that we've talked about replacing for the last 16 years, 17 years since we did the CIP in 2005 and 2006, we haven't had money for it, we've replaced the section from right beside Chetola Lake to the wastewater plant through the highway widening project through the Chestnut Ridge sewer service that lower section was replaced, we haven't done the upper section. So really what we did was we went ahead and included the design of that in the bidding of that in the package. So, if we had enough money, we would do that section. When you add that section, it put the project a little over budget when we set aside contingency money that the state wanted us to do. So, what we're recommending is we put that piece on hold for right now, until the project gets along a way. And before we get to the point of paving and everything, and that's probably sometime later this summer into the fall as we get a lot of the pipe done and we know where we stand budget wise, we will probably be coming back to add that piece. That's our expectation. So, the next section, the next piece that we're talking about awarding is the sidewalk project, which we have funding for from the bond proceeds. From the low end of the Speckled Trout parking lot down to the north end of Hill Street. So, through the project, we have the waterline replacements, which has the low bid was \$3,156,070.45. And the sewer section, the low bid was \$801,640. The sidewalk was \$326,502. So, what I will say, let me back up to say, we advertise for bids, and we had a bid opening on January 26. We only had one bid, so we didn't open we re-advertised. And on February 21 we only had one bid, but we were able to open that bid because of the way the statutes are written. And that one bid was from Iron Mountain construction company and their low total bid for all of the work was \$8,628,791.45. That's for all the divisions. Iron Mountain is appropriately licensed to do the project, the Town has worked with them many times over the last 20 or 30 years successfully. They did the Sunset project, which had water, sewer, streetscape on it so they have completed a number of other similar projects. They did the Sourwood water replacement. So, they've done other work in the area. So, we're recommending that the Town Council approve awarding the water, the eight-inch sewer section and the sidewalk part of the project for a total amount of \$4,284,212.45. We also recommend setting aside a contingency for construction. That's \$207,753. And the reason that's an odd number of contingencies is that takes the water, sewer and the engineering costs associated with that plus the contingency add up to the \$4.8 million that the Town had funding for from the state. The sidewalk part of the award would be above that, obviously. So, our intention would be that on this project. water and sewer we spent all of the \$4.8 million. So that \$207,000, if everything goes as it is, will pay for about half of that 18-inch sewer. So, we're hoping that there'll be you know, there's there's a few places where we've added an extra vial or an extra fire hydrant, things like that in the quantities. So, we are hoping there's some extra quantities to cover some of that extra cost. So, we won't have to need the full amount. But like I said, we'll come back with that at a later date.

Charlie Sellers

What was the cost on the 18-inch sewer line that was not replaced?

Doug Chapman

It's around about \$400,000.

Charlie Sellers

So, we're short about \$150,000, \$180,000,

Doug Chapman

Something like that, yes. And now that doesn't account in other factors, like sales tax and other things that the Town might get reimbursements for.

Doug Matheson

Let me ask you a question where you were talking about that piece down by Chetola, when was the last time we changed that one going across the dam?

Doug Chapman

That section was replaced when we did the sewer and water to Chestnut Ridge. So yes, that section has been replaced, everything from there at the corner of the gas station back to this point was replaced when the road was widened.

Charlie Sellers

What do you think Council?

Albert Yount

I make a motion to approve water, eight-inch sewer and sidewalk at a bid of \$4,284,212.45 with a contingency of \$207,723.

Charlie Sellers

Do we have a second?

David Harwood

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any additional discussion?

All

All were in favor of the motion.

David Harwood

Great, thank you.

Charlie Sellers

I do have a question.

Doug Chapman

Okay.

Charlie Sellers

I what percentage does that take care of our aging water systems in the town? Can you give me an idea?

Doug Chapman

The only idea I can have is not a whole lot. I mean there's a number of how much of the systems is cast iron, how much of its galvanized. We did that in 2014 when we talked about the bond, and it's a pretty significant number. But this has been the worst section for breaks over the last several years.

Charlie Sellers

Okay.

Albert Yount

Now this won't allow sewer tap ons for any of the people in town that don't have sewer now, right?

Shane Fox

Correct, this is not an extension of sewer, this is just replacement.

Doug Chapman

Yeah, this just replaces sections and Main Street.

Albert Yount

Do you know that number Mr. Manager, the number of people that don't have sewer?

Shane Fox

Approximately 400 individuals do not have sewer.

Albert Yount

Would that be equated to houses?

Shane Fox

Yes, it is. So that is taking my rough math of the number of water customers minus the number of sewer customers equate to about four individuals. How many houses in town? That's 400 houses, about 400 customers.

Albert Yount

How many do we have total?

Shane Fox

Water customers we have 2,350ish, so about 400 of that number does not have sewer. Primarily Mayview and Laurel Park are the two primary sections more than majority of the 400 without sewer.

Albert Yount

Mayview's constrained by the current pump station. Is that right?

Shane Fox

That is one of the contributing factors is the pump station that will be replaced during the USDA loan process that's coming up. That is correct. And I will add that the other constraint on Laurel Park is the topography of it.

Albert Yount

And rock.

Shane Fox

Rock and cost of pumping that sewer. If you recall the pump station replacement at Mayview which would be I guess equivalent to what something that would be taking place in Laurel Park, probably something very similar to that I would say is excess of a million dollars just for the pumping station. So it's a pretty significant cost. Replacing the Mayview pump station will allow us to discuss potentially expansion of Mayview.

Albert Yount

Will?

Shane Fox

Yes, will.

Albert Yount

Okay, thanks.

Charlie Sellers

Ok Council, Memorial Park PartF. Back to Doug Chapman.

Doug Chapman

So, and you'll recognize a lot of these slides look like the slides that we had for the retreat. But this is the layout of the park that the Council approved applying for PartF application, which I guess was in the spring of '21. So that PARTF application was approved. Series later when budget changes happen. So that project was eventually approved for a half million-dollar budget. As we began the design of the project, there were a number of things that were changed and added. We added separate pickleball courts, converting one of the basketball courts to a pickleball court. We moved where the picnic shelter was going to go to keep the volleyball court where it is, we're still replacing the tennis courts. There's a lot of sidewalk work, upgrading the bathrooms, all that's included in the project. The original project, and it was on the first slide had a budget of \$1,285,000. As we added more things to it, we didn't necessarily come up with a number, but we expected it was going to be more. So, on that project we had a bid opening scheduled for January 29th at two o'clock. We didn't have any bidders show up for that project. So, we readvertised for February 21st, same day as the Main Street project, and we had

one bidder show up. The low bid was provided by Greene Construction company who's done a number of projects for the town and their base bid was \$2,984,483.88. That project was well above the original budget and well above what we would expect the budget to be. I can't give you a great explanation why. I mean we know how much things cost these days. So, what we wanted to talk about was what are the strategies moving forward. We can, because we have a low bidder, we can negotiate with that bidder, or we can reject the bids and readvertise. Typically, when we readvertise for bids, we changed the scope, so that we're not just bidding the same project again. So, we can look at reducing the scope, we can look at some phasing of the project, we do have a schedule, a timeline for PARTF to be complete. We're well within that timeframe. And typically, it's a 36-month completion. And I think that agreement was signed, like mid last year, something like that. So, we still have time to do the PARTF part of the project, if we want to separate out and do some pieces now, some pieces as part of the PARTF project.

Doug Matheson

So, we can build the bathrooms now and rebid it?

Doug Chapman

Yes, we can take and move forward with just the bathrooms. We can rebid the bathrooms and move forward with just the bathrooms and then wait till a later time in the fall or next year and bid the rest of the park improvements if we want to do that.

Melissa Pickett

The bathrooms were the one part that didn't affect the PARTF grant, right?

Doug Chapman

Yes, we did not get points for the part of the grant. At one point we talked about using, because you have to have a 50/50 match with PARTF and the restroom money could count as part of the match. But I think even if we do the bathroom, we're not going to have to worry about spending a million dollars on everything else. So, we'll match the half a million PARTF with the rest of the project.

David Harwood

What was the bathroom budget at?

Doug Chapman

Originally, I think it was \$450,000. And I can't remember if that included the renovation because we're also renovating the existing bathrooms. So, they'll all be everything will be new. And there'll be tiled walls, tiled floors, new fixtures. There's a lot of work.

David Harwood

Do you remember what Greene's number was for that?

Doug Chapman

No, I don't remember that one off top my head.

Charlie Sellers

So, I've got a question, will Greene allow, we you have to rebid just the bathrooms or will Greene's take their bid and just section off the bathroom bid and say okay, we will do that bathroom for that amount of money. What are you looking for from Council?

Doug Chapman

We can do either or, I mean that's what statutes allow. You can negotiate with the low bidder. If you come to an agreeable price, then you can move forward. Or if you can't come to an agreeable price, you reject the bids, and then rebid the project.

Charlie Sellers

Yes, Pete.

Pete Gherini

I'm understanding the critical need for bathrooms, which Jennifer and all of us have talked about, Shane. I suggest we go ahead then and go with the bathrooms and try and negotiate with Greene's to see if they're more accommodating. But we need the bathrooms, let's do that first.

Charlie Sellers

So, are you making a motion?

Pete Gherini

I will

Charlie Sellers

Okay. So your motion is to allow McGill to contact Greene's stating that the town would like to look at doing the bathroom renovation, new bathrooms and bring numbers back to us again for approval.

Doug Matheson

And wait until later on to rebid.

Charlie Sellers

Yeah, wait until later on to rebid.

Melissa Pickett

I have one question in reference to that. Were we not using the bathroom portion to do our 50/50 match. So, if we pull that out where does that leave us in the future for our PARTF grant and us matching?

Doug Chapman

I think the rest of the project will still be a million dollars.

Melissa Pickett

I know we have the PARTF grant. But that does not change the fact that we still have to match it in order to execute the grant. And if we were using the restrooms as a chunk of that 50/50 match, I'm curious if we pull these out what we're going to do for that.

Jennifer Brown

So I had a conversation with our representative with the State of North Carolina Resources and we can go ahead and do the restrooms, and we can do the rest of the project later. It all coincides we have three years to spend the money. So, we can divvy it up, can use separate contractors and all of that as long as it's all within that three-year span. Also if we need an extension, there is also the possibility of asking for an extension.

Charlie Sellers

Mr. Yount seconded the motion. Do we have any additional discussion?

David Harwood

Yes, so the motion as I understand it is to move ahead with the bathrooms for which we don't have a bid on correct.

Charlie Sellers

We do have a bid on the bathrooms from Greene Construction, correct?

Doug Chapman

We have a bid on the project, and I understand the motion would be we'd go back and negotiate a price for the bathrooms with Greene Construction. If that price comes back acceptable, then the town could move forward and award it. Or we can reject the bid and readvertise and bid that piece out separately.

Charlie Sellers

And they'd have to come back to you anyway, right?

David Harwood

Right. Okay.

Doug Chapman

I mean, right now, we only have one bid to compare our numbers to.

David Harwood

I'm concerned about waiting on the rest of the park, tabling that until the summer or fall. Just because of so many things in the construction industry with regard to lead times, availability of contractors and all of that. And I would want us to go ahead to start figuring out how to make up the gap without violating the terms of our PARTF grant.

Doug Chapman

Well, one of the things that I will say as far as lead times go, once you take the bathroom out of the project, the rest of the project probably isn't long lead time items. And when you look at the project, and

this is why it's hard to get contractors to bid on parks. This isn't the only park that we've bid, I mean, this is the third park in the last several months that we've only gotten one bid on. Similar parks, at least you've got a large component that is sitework. The grading, the paving, the courts, etc. And then a large portion that's building. So there is a reasonableness to separating those out into two projects. And if we did rebid, we're likely to receive, we could get more bids, because it's just a building project at that point. And a building contractor could bid on that. And they don't have to sub out as much if they're trying to sub out all the other site and amenity work.

Charlie Sellers

So, I guess David's main concerns he doesn't, you know want to kick the can down through the park.

Doug Matheson

But we don't want to spend \$2 million dollars either.

Charlie Sellers

That's right.

Pete Gherini

Yeah, exactly.

Doug Matheson

What we think is really over budget right now.

Charlie Sellers

But so essentially, Doug, you're saying by doing this, this takes a large piece of that puzzle out. That still will open the door to possibly more bids for the park project for the recreational parts of the park project. Is that correct?

Doug Chapman

Yes.

Charlie Sellers

Okay.

Doug Chapman

And if we end up rebidding the bathroom by themselves, that probably opens that up too.

Charlie Sellers

Okay. What do you think Council?

Pete Gherini

Call the question.

Charlie Sellers

We have a first and a second. Any further discussion?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Alright, thanks. Have a good evening, Doug, thanks. Okay, back when you also chose the groups for planning and board of adjustments and so on. There was an issue that arose with the board of adjustments alternate. Kevin, you want to take the lead on that.

Kevin Rothrock

So, at the February regular meeting, Council appointed citizens to the various volunteer boards. After the initial vote, there remains a spot available for an alternate member on the Board of Adjustment. As a current member, Sarah Murphy was moved to a regular member position. So, after reviewing the volunteer applications, I recommend the appointment of Brooks Mason to serve as Board of Adjustment alternative member for a three year term and his information was included. I think you had it last month, but I put it in the packet for you.

Albert Yount

Motion to approve.

Charlie Sellers

Albert made a motion to approve. Second?

David Harwood

Second.

Charlie Sellers

David seconded. Discussion? Okay, Council how do you vote?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Thank you. All right, just a couple of short notes as Mayor, I would like to thank all the conservancy groups that are out here. Conserving our natural resources, gosh we've got Blue Ridge Conservancy Group Corp of North Carolina, Foothills, New River. Wow. And it's great to see all that happening. I want to say thank you to you guys. I want to thank you to the Foothills Conservancy, which is acquiring a property down in the valley. And gosh, the Middle Fork Greenway group, it's just amazing. You know, it's great to see. So, thanks to all.

Albert Yount

It's very good meeting.

David Harwood

Recently I attended, I think all of us were invited. But I attended a seminar at the Children's Council called Think Babies. Mr. Fox serves on the board of that organization. And I have to tell you, it was incredibly impactful for me what that organization does. I got to hear stories firsthand from moms, and what that organization means to them and the challenges that they face. And daycare was definitely towards the top of that list. And as I look at our town, and what our community can do, what the Blowing Rock Academy is going to provide for our employees cannot be understated. And I'm so glad that we're doing that. And I really want to applaud Mr. Fox, and all the staff that worked on that it is just a wonderful thing.

Melissa Pickett

I'm just excited about all the projects we have in our future. I'm excited for our Town.

Charlie Sellers

Thanks to you guys, the citizens, Shane and all the department heads.

Doug Matheson

I guess Mine is gonna be a little longer. I just got back from two weeks ago from a Risk Management meeting with the League of Municipalities represented up here, and just a few things, just to mention for y'all, and the public. We settled on insurances all the way across the board. And it looks like we've held it down as much as we can. But the bad news is, in each category, there will be a significant increase this year. All managers are pretty well aware of that now. Some of the things that we were advised on also down there, and I'm sure Melissa will back me on this that we're hearing is one of the ways that like they're looking at handling affordable housing is a lot of it is through deregulation is cutting back a lot of the powers that the Towns have. And opening that up, one of the things is there is three or four bills out there right now and you know, how bills that can be there one minute and disappear. They're looking about a possibility of doing away with ETJ's. One is looking at offering up to a million dollars if you'll build a multi-district inside your Town to where you have more townhouses, complexes, apartments, they're offering up to maybe a million dollars of infrastructure needs. Some of the ways that they're trying to open up that. So just keep in mind and I'm sure Melissa hears it all the time, what we hear one day could be completely gone tomorrow and just as fast they can have a new one on there too. That's is as up to date as I know right now.

Ron Cutlip

Thank you Doug, Pete.

Pete Gherini

Just a couple of things. Reminder that we have our Economic Development Commission meeting at the American Legion on Thursday. Charlie's going to welcome the group. And Shane is going to make a presentation on the healthcare situation. And I'm sure that everybody will be looking forward to that. The meeting will be 1:00 pm until 2:30 pm. And the public's invited and I hope anybody that's interested, we'll come by. The second thing, I have received a number of calls on the email that was sent out on the 81% approval of the utility thing. And I'm sorry that Tom is not here, because I was going to ask him a number of questions that have been asked to me, and I have no idea how to answer

them, because I'm not part of the group that's doing this. So, some of the questions would be, was this approved by the board? Who is it sent out to? Because I didn't get it, Shane didn't get it, Charlie didn't, David, did you, Melissa did you?

Charlie Sellers

That must be the 19%.

Pete Gherini

Yeah. So how many respondents did they have? How did they arrive at that that 81%, because I think that needs to be clarified. But since they're not here, I'm not sure how that's gonna work. Unless I just call Tom and pose these questions to him.

Charlie Sellers

That'd be a good idea. Because I've had numerous calls on it too. Yeah. People want to know where they were supposed to vote.

Pete Gherini

And the other question was, why didn't I get a vote? I mean, are they using a different list than other lists? I don't know. So, anyway, I'll follow up with Tom.

Charlie Sellers

Okay. Thank you.

Ron Cutlip

Mr. Fox.

Shane Fox

Thank you Mayor and Council, I would have to agree good meeting tonight. Thank you for allowing us to move forward with some very important projects, overdue and much needed projects. I might add, and the staff appreciates your willingness to allow us to move forward with those projects. Main Street alone has been talked about for a number of decades. So that is a tremendous win for us. That will limit our need of repairs that normally happens in the middle of winter. A couple of dates, I'll provide upcoming meetings. Our TDA meeting is next Tuesday, the 21st at 3:30 pm. We do have our paid parking Town Hall meeting which is going to be an FAQ kind of question and answer Town Hall format with Chief Miller and myself on March the 28th at 6pm at the American Legion. We will have in the room itself, some FAQ, informational pay parking, and then Chief Miller and I will go through what you've seen is our pay parking proposal and allow for anyone within the audience to have a question and answer back and forth. We have encouraged you all to attend, but not necessarily participate, as that will be coming to you more than likely in April or May. We also have this Thursday, Representatives from Senator Tillis and Representative Fox coming to town after the Appalachian breakfast. So, this Thursday, we do have the Appalachian Community breakfast at Appalachian State that you all are invited to and then following breakfast representatives from Tillis and Fox will be coming over to Town, I think to hopefully take a tour, weather permitting. Also go out to the Rock and our goal is to share with them some of these wonderful projects and see if there's any potential monies to be

had that are out there. Budget process has begun so that's good news. You know, that's that's about a year long process. But that has now has started and we have meetings this week with department heads. So, get ready for some budget fun coming up in the next few months. I did want to point out one thing that I thought was important to note within our staff reports under the police department, if you noticed they made 311 traffic stops during the month, month February. That was up from over 250 in the month of January. That alone are close to 600 stops in two months. If you've been along through 321 recently, you've seen them out there. So that is more than 10 a day over the last two months so we're very appreciative of them other than that I will save everything else I have for a decently lengthy closed session.

Albert Yount

Police report also said they had 4,100 contacts Is that Is that a valid figure.

Shane Fox

It is, I'm not sure if chief is here tonight but every time, they are doing a foot patrol, property check, traffic stops. There he is. Do you want to explain the 4,000 number what all that entails?

Aaron Miller

Any time we have any kind of contact if its foot patrol, traffic stops anything counts in that number. It's not necessarily calls that come into our communication centers that are dispatched, but it's also the officer-initiated activities.

Shane Fox

And I would add part of that traffic number does include one of our two new officers our second one has not started yet he's finishing up Basic Law Enforcement, but William who was sworn in last month last meeting has started with us and on the night shift and I think is definitely contributed to that number with along 321.

Albert Yount

as well head count does the dog.

Shane Fox

the dog is not quite in service yet, so it is it is counting is zero right now. But the dog is not quite certified but will be coming.

Charlie Sellers

Alright, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to take a 10-minute recess and then we're going to go into closed session.

Albert Yount

We're going into close session per NCGS 143-318.11. (a)(3) and NCGS 143-318.11. (a)(5).

Charlie Sellers

Thank you so much for attending this evening. There should be no decisions made following closed session.

MAYOR _____

Charlie Sellers

ATTEST _____

Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Tax Releases #2022-08 – Attachment A

Tax Refund #2022-03 – Attachment B

Budget Amendment - #2023-07 – Attachment C

New River Conservancy PowerPoint – Attachment D

Blowing Rock Academy CUP #2023-02 – Attachment E