

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Board of Commissioners
March 10, 2009

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting took place in the Council Chambers located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Keith Tester, Phillip Pickett, Albert Yount, and Tommy Klutz. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Assistant Public Works Director Michael Wilcox, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Police Chief Eric Brown, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order and reminded everyone of the Town's 120th Birthday Celebration to be held the following day at Town Hall. Mayor Lawrence also expressed condolences to Commissioner Yount on the recent death of his mother Mildred Yount and to Public Works Director Johnny Lentz on the death of his father Lewis Lentz.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Pickett made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner Tester mentioned a change was needed adding Phillip Pickett to the list of reappointments to the Tourism Development Authority. The motion as amended was seconded by Commissioner Yount. Unanimously approved.

PRESENTATION

Mayor Lawrence recognized Mr. Bernie Keele for 5 years of service on the TDA board, Ms. Virginia Jones for 3 years of service on the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commissioner, and Mr. Ron Mace for 6 years of service as E.T.J. member on both the Board of Adjustment and Planning Board. Mayor Lawrence stated unfortunately they were unable to attend. Mayor Lawrence asked Commissioner Tester to come forward and receive a plaque honoring him for 5 years of service on the Tourism Development Authority. Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Tester for his great leadership during his tenure on the board.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Grand Opening Banners – Code Amendment (#2009-01)

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock presented to Council for their consideration an amendment to the Sign Ordinance allowing banners for business grand openings. The banners would be limited to 24 square feet and allowable for a period of 21 days and not more than 10 days prior to the official grand opening. According to Mr. Rothrock, the amendment would apply to new businesses created after the effective date of the ordinance. This would also include existing businesses that move to a new location.

During their February 19, 2009 meeting, the Planning Board recommended approval of the draft ordinance as submitted.

Commissioner Klutz voiced his desire for the addition of more categories such as special event banners, anniversary banners, etc. Mayor Lawrence and Commissioner Pickett agreed with Commissioner Klutz. They felt there were several instances where the sign ordinance needed to be changed but limitations were also needed. Commissioner Tester also agreed with the grand opening category, but felt a maximum of times per year should be specified. Mr. Tester felt the maximum time allowed for grand opening banners should be changed to 14 days instead of 21 days.

Commissioner Klutz suggested the Planning Department could monitor the use of banners and charge a nominal fee for a banner permit if the sign ordinance amendments were approved.

Council briefly discussed special event banners in Memorial Park. Planning Director Rothrock felt the Town should use caution when deciding which special event banners would be allowed. Commissioner Tester felt that staff should review previous minutes from the Planning Board and Town Council to find out why banners were disallowed years ago.

Commissioner Ball stated she was a member of Council during that time and clutter was the main reason several changes were made to the ordinance such as disallowing outside displays, signs or banners, etc. Commissioner Klutz felt with proper monitoring these problems could be alleviated.

Ms. Nancy Santay owner of Cabin Fever spoke in favor of allowing grand opening banners, but felt the 21 day limit was too long. Ms. Santay suggested the Chamber of Commerce invest in high quality fabric banners for merchants to use that could be attached to the lampposts along Main Street.

Mrs. Ginny Stevens of 852 Dogwood Lane agreed with Ms. Santay about limitations, but she also felt events held by non-profit groups should be allowed to have banners as well.

Commissioner Yount commented that he didn't want Council to micromanage how the Planning Board should vote or make recommendations. He wanted to make sure the Planning Board had a chance to discuss other suggestions.

After further discussion, a motion was given by Commissioner Ball, seconded by Commissioner Tester to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Klutz made a motion to send the draft sign ordinance amendment back to the Planning Board for further review, seconded by Commissioner Ball. Unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Drought Update

Town Manager Hildebran advised the Town reservoir was as full pond and recommended the Town remain in Stage I Voluntary Conservation.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Surplus – Vehicles/Equipment (Resolution #2009-02)

Pursuant to N.C.G.S.160A-270(C), Town Council is authorized to designate an appropriate town official to dispose of personal property belonging to the town by public auction. Town Manager Hildebran presented Resolution #2009-02 for Council's consideration requesting authorization to sell the property via electronic auction on www.GovDeals.com for a bidding period of 28 days.

Commissioner Pickett made a motion to accept Resolution #2009-02 as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ball. Unanimously approved.

Resolution #2009-02-Exhibit A

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. O Wayne Green approached Council regarding the procedures of their last regular meeting in February. Mr. Green stated he had a problem with the transparency of the meeting due to the fact that Council did not announce to the public the regular meeting would be reopened after going into closed session to discuss a personnel matter. Mr. Green stated he would have stayed until the closed session was over if he had known they planned to discuss a letter they had received regarding the land trade between the Town and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Mr. Green requested that in the future, Council announce their plans to reopen the regular meeting should they go into closed session.

Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Green for his comments and stated Council had been appropriately reprimanded.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Town Manager Hildebran commended the Parks & Recreation and Public Works Departments for their hard work on the renovation efforts on the Memorial Park restroom facilities. He also thanked Emergency Services Director Kent Graham for the recent improvements to the sound system at Town Hall.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS (3-10-09)
Resolution #2009-02 Exhibit A