

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Board of Commissioners
Departmental Meeting-March 11, 2009

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Wednesday, March 11, 2009 in the Council Chambers located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Keith Tester, Albert Yount, Phil Pickett and Tommy Klutz. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

PARKS & RECREATION/TOWN BEAUTIFICATION ISSUES

Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown updated Council regarding several maintenance issues her department had completed at the Grover Robbins Pool, the Ruritan Club building, and various Town Parks, etc.

In reference to special events, Mrs. Brown stated the Fourth of July and Christmas Parades had been sponsored by the Chamber in the past, but her department was now in charge of the parades. Council suggested changing the parade time from 2:00 p.m. to earlier in the day, possibly 10:00 or 11:00 a.m. Mrs. Brown explained plans were already made for the Fourth of July Parade that would be difficult to change at this late notice. Mrs. Brown felt it would be easier to change the time at the Christmas parade held in November. Council asked Mrs. Brown to solicit public input regarding the time change before a final decision was made.

Council briefly discussed the No Dogs in Town Parks rule. It was suggested that a compromise be made allowing dogs at Davant Field during the period of November 15th through March 15th since there was less activity during this time. This ordinance change would be presented during the next regular Council meeting.

Mrs. Brown presented Council with a draft Event Guide document for their review outlining plans and requirements of usage of Memorial Park.

Mrs. Brown updated Council regarding a change in staff with the resignation of Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Amy Flieg. She advised this position had been filled by Garryd Caliendo.

Also, options were discussed for improvements to the outside perimeter at Davant Field and enhancements to Annie Cannon Park and Koerschner Park, etc.

Council briefly discussed the American Legion building and suggested that Commissioner Yount speak with Mr. Ron Oberle regarding future options and ideas for this building.

Council commended Mrs. Brown on the great job she and her staff were doing.

Public Safety Issues (Police/Emergency Services)

Discussion began with Police Chief Eric Brown regarding the feasibility of closing Main Street from Park Avenue to Chestnut Street in order to hold the Wine Festival. Town Manager Hildebran advised that Mr. Jimmy Crippen had approached the Town requesting permission to hold this event on Main Street. Mr. Crippen felt this would bring more visitors into the shops in the downtown area.

Council voiced their concerns regarding emergency vehicles trying to get to the hospital should an emergency occur. A.L.E concerns were also discussed since there would be open containers of alcohol on Main Street during the event. Chief Brown expressed his concern regarding this being a civil liability for the Town.

Commissioner Tester stated he had been asked by several groups about closing Main Street for events and he wanted to know for sure if this could be done and if not, he would like to be able to give specific reasons why this could not be accomplished.

Commissioner Klutz suggested the use of the Maple Street Parking Lot for the Wine Festival event since there was a time constraint and several issues had to be worked out regarding the closing of Main Street. Commissioner Pickett made a motion for staff to proceed further with a request to NCDOT to close Main Street from Park Avenue to Chestnut Street for specific special events, and if this was not feasible for this year's event, he asked that staff suggest the use of the Maple Street Parking Lot to the Wine Festival representatives, seconded by Commissioner Yount. Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Tester asked that staff seek permission from the proper authorities regarding the closing of Main Street for special events and document all correspondence. He also requested that staff meet with Mr. Crippen making him aware there are several issues to be resolved before Main Street could be closed, but the Maple Street Parking Lot could be utilized this year.

Chief Brown updated Council on several special projects his department was involved in, such as the D.A.R.E. Program, Crime Prevention programs, etc. Chief Brown also reviewed activity statistics for his department.

According to Chief Brown, parking continues to be a concern downtown. He mentioned several recommendations that were made in the Retail Strategy Report such as changing the time limit from 2- hour parking to 3-hours and to strictly enforce the limit to discourage parking on Main Street by non-customers. Mr. Brown advised the use of hand-held parking citation units to enforce time limits, which was suggested in the report

as well as warning tickets for the first violation. Mr. Brown recommended continuing to keep on-street parking free and new signage to reflect the changes in parking times.

Chief Brown spoke regarding State of North Carolina House Bill #1755 legislative/administrative changes affecting the E-911 telecommunication funding. Chief Brown explained the changes specified that E-911 funds are to be paid to primary PSAPS and Blowing Rock Police Department was a secondary PSAP. According to Town Manager Hildebran, approximately \$22,000 in State funding would be cut from Blowing Rock Police Department's budget. It was Council's consensus for Chief Brown to continue communications with Watauga/Caldwell Counties and the State E-911 Board regarding this issue.

Other areas mentioned by Chief Brown were employee training, equipment and vehicle replacement plans, and enhancement needs to their facility.

Town Manager Hildebran stated due to the lack of time, the departmental meetings with Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Emergency Services Director Kent Graham would be postponed until a later date.

Also, Council would meet with Public Works Director Johnny Lentz at a later date due to the sudden death of his father.

OTHER

Town Manager Hildebran advised that ABC sales had declined recently.

Commissioner Yount voiced his discomfort regarding a statement from Welborn Alexander during their joint meeting with BRAHM earlier in the week and the financial concerns Mr. Alexander had regarding the BRAHM project due to the present economic time. Mr. Yount also expressed concerns about funding in light of the BRAHM project and the possibility of not giving employees a cost of living raise. Town Manager Hildebran stated he would continue to monitor this issue.

It was consensus of Council to request an audit report from BRAHM to provide assurance that they could fund a museum. If confidentiality was a concern, Council stated the Town Auditor could review the audit and provide an opinion.

Council briefly discussed town banking services and agreed that only banks located in Blowing Rock should be solicited with a Request for Proposal. Mayor Lawrence suggested, that in order to deter perception of a conflict of interest, United Community Bank submit their proposal a minimum of one hour prior to the deadline, once established. Council concurred with this suggestion.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk