

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
September 12, 2023

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock, NC. Present were Mayor Pro-Tem Doug Matheson and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett and Pete Gherini. Mayor Charlie Sellers was unable to attend. Others in attendance were Interim Town Manager Kevin Rothrock, Attorney Tucker Deal filled in for Allen Moseley, Town Engineers Doug Chapman and Jared Wright, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson, Public Works Director Matt Blackburn, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, IT Director Thomas Steele and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson verified attendance via roll call.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTE APPROVAL

Council Member Harwood made the motion to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2023, regular and closed session meeting, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

Council Member Gherini made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Pickett.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Budget Amendment - #2023-14
2. Special Event – Speckled Trout Cornhole Tournament
3. Fireworks Request – Chetola Wedding
4. Capital Equipment

Council Member Harwood made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Yount.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

1. Daughters of the American Revolution Proclamation

Interim Town Manager Kevin Rothrock read a proclamation for Constitution Week September 17-23. **Proclamation For Constitution Week - Attachment C**

REGULAR AGENDA

1. BRAAC Ordinance

Interim Town Manager Rothrock stated at the mid-year retreat in June, Council asked staff to consider a reorganization of BRAAC that added a recreation/public land representation to the commission. BRAAC members reported at the retreat that they wanted public projects to go before them prior to going to Council for consideration. Manager Rothrock explained in response a draft ordinance language change was made that would widen the scope of BRAAC with the addition of a recreation/public land oversight component. Language was also added to clarify that BRAAC has the responsibility of acting as the Tree Board since 2020. Manager Rothrock further explained if Council wishes to move forward with the direction of the proposed ordinance, it would be submitted to Planning Board for review. He reviewed some of the proposed changes to the ordinance with the board and asked for questions or feedback.

Council Member Yount mentioned it had been difficult in the to past to fill the board with the number of spots available which caused Council to reduce the number of members on the board. In light of that he was curious why the number of spots in the proposed change went from five members to nine.

Manager Rothrock explained the idea was because it would be combining two boards, BRAAC and the previous recreation committee that was formed. He further explained Council can have however many they want on the board, it was just a rough draft and can be changed.

Council Member Gherini stated he agreed with Council Member Yount that nine seemed to be too many and felt the number needed to be lower.

Council Member Pickett asked if by adding the recreation part to this board if that would really be something the BRAAC Board would be dealing with or if it would still be handled in house in the Parks and Recreation Department.

Manager Rothrock clarified it would be on the property of the parks side and facilities, but not recreational events/activities/programs and so forth. All of that will still be handled by Parks and Recreation staff.

Council Member Pickett stated she thought the Parks and Rec committee was more of a strategic planning group and BRAAC would be more of the hands on putting that strategic plan into effect.

Council Member Harwood explained that advisory group was for strategic planning and to establish mission statements for each park and something to gauge future

improvements to those parks if appropriate. Example being something we might put in Memorial Park might not be appropriate for Broyhill Park. He further explained Manager Rothrock is right in that this combined commission would be focused on facilities and parks versus activities. He stated he thought the hang up is just the word "recreation".

Council Member Harwood asked if BRAAC had considered the changes.

Manager Rothrock stated he had emailed the changes to BRAAC Member Whitney Brown and she had a question about the recreation content related to the criteria for membership.

Council Member Pickett asked if all the BRAAC Members were involved or just Member Brown.

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated BRAAC had discussed at their last meeting and the other members were very open to combining both boards and having a process for Public Land. She also stated they tasked Member Brown with working with Manager Rothrock.

Council Member Harwood mentioned the only other thing he would add is the murals that the Town owns needs to be added.

Council Member Pickett asked if that could be made a sub-category to the Public Art section and perhaps a fund be set up to maintain those murals and future murals. Even have that be a part of the fundraising efforts BRAAC does to help offset those costs. Council Member Pickett further asked if Manager Rothrock could explore some other options for the Board name.

Manager Rothrock stated he could absolutely do that, his plan is to hand this off to Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson to take to Planning Board and let them give some suggestions and feedback.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked if staff could get with the old Parks and Recreation committee and see if there is a strong enough interest to help determine the number of people needed for the board.

Council consensus was to proceed with the few changes and have Planning Board review and give their comments/suggestions to bring back to Council for final approval.

2. Traffic Update

Captain Nathan Kirk gave a brief update on current traffic enforcement efforts.

Council Member Harwood stated he sympathized with Mr. Rick Parson as he has been very focused on speeding on Green Hill Road and wanted to know if Captain Kirk had any opinions about speeding on that road.

Captain Kirk explained there are speeders on Green Hill Road, but just from sheer volume data there are more people speeding on Ransom Street than on Green Hill Road. Captain Kirk further explained that two officers had gone up and clocked approximately fifty vehicles and max speeds were 35 mph. Captain Kirk advised there are speeders on Green Hill Road, but that is not the highest speeding area in town. Hwy 321 and Hwy 221 are the highest speeding areas.

Council thanked Captain Kirk for his update.

OFFICIALS REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Council Member Yount – None
- Council Member Harwood – None
- Council Member Pickett – None
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson – The community had lost two members recently, Nancy Collins and Kent Tarbutton and asked for the families to be remembered in everyone’s prayers.
- Council Member Gherini – Met with Dr. Alexander about the possibility of getting help with funding the school resource officer at Blowing Rock School. The next Economic Development meeting will be on September 21st at 3:00 pm.
- Town Attorney – None
- Jared Wright – Gave an update on current projects.
- Interim Manager Kevin Rothrock – Gave a update on the Town Hall remodel project. Recognized Nicole Norman for her years with the Town, after 16 years with the Town she is leaving to pursue a new job at Appalachian State.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:00 p.m. with no further business, Council Member Gherini made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

Budget Amendment - #2023-14 – Attachment A

Capital Equipment – Attachment C

Daughters of the American Revolution Proclamation - C