

Planning & Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, September 21st, 2023

5:30 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning & Zoning Board met on Thursday, September 21st, 2023 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Members present were Chairman Bill McCarter, Tom Barrett, Joe Papa, Chris Squires, Cat Perry and Brooks Mayson. Staff members present were Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson and Support Specialist Taylor Miller.

Chairman McCarter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Chairman McCarter asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda. *Motion to approve made by Tom Barrett, seconded by Chris Squires. All in favor.*

Chairman McCarter asked if there was a motion to approve the August 17th, 2023 Minutes. *Motion to approve made by Chris Squires, seconded by Tom Barrett. All in favor.*

1. BRAAC Re-evaluation

Interim Planning Director, Brian Johnson, told the board that at the winter retreat, Town Council talked about trying to clarify the roles and responsibilities of BRAAC. They discussed adding a recreational component, meaning possibly helping decide changes or development of our parks and public land, town property or anything else involved with recreation. They discussed finding a set number of members for a quorum. BRAAC also acts as the Tree Board for the town. BRAAC's responsibilities also include reviewing any public art or signs/murals before going to council for final approval. In addition to clarifying responsibilities, the council wanted to attempt to change the name of BRAAC to something that could reflect their newly added duties.

Chairman McCarter asked if the Tree Board was mentioned anywhere else in the code. Mr. Johnson said it is referenced in the code (Section 16-22). Mr. McCarter noted we would have to change those mentions anywhere else in the code if we change anything with BRAAC.

Chairman McCarter said he thinks nine members for the board is too many and five is not enough, making 7 a better number for amount of board members.

Member Joe Papa asked if this discussion is to do away with BRAAC or add to BRAAC. Mr. Johnson clarified this is to add responsibilities to BRAAC. The members of BRAAC want to clarify their roles. It started as just an Appearance Commission and now there's talk of adding more recreation involvement. With a lot of new projects coming to town, this board could provide a little bit more scrutiny and review for some of the projects going on around town.

Chairman McCarter asked if the Tree Board requires an arborist on the board. Mr. Johnson said no but that it might be nice to have someone with that kind of knowledge.

Mr. Johnson said there are a few requirements for the Tree Board. They need to have a small budget for trees in town and they need to host an annual Arbor Day celebration every year. These responsibilities are BRAACs already because they are acting as the Tree Board.

Mrs. Cat Perry asked if the Tree Board is involved in taking down trees, like the ones that were taken down in Memorial Park. Mr. Johnson noted that those trees may have been taken down before the Tree Board was in place but that there will be some new discussions on trees that need to be addressed soon. That will be their responsibility.

Mrs. Cat Perry asked if new people would be added with recreation background, design background, etc. Mr. Johnson said that would be considered board requirements when applications start coming in at the start of the year. Mr. Johnson believes they have enough members to staff a board of 7 currently.

Tom Barrett asked if any positions were being removed, Mr. Johnson said no. They have 5 current members and are proposing 9 members.

Mr. Johnson said that they're thinking any public projects that come in could potentially go through this board as well for some sort of recommendation or approval.

Tom Barrett mentioned that it would help with control and consistency.

Mr. Johnson asked about thoughts on a new name and how to incorporate some of the new duties into the name.

Tom Barrett mentioned changing "Commission" to "Board" so it would be Public Land and Recreation Board, striking the word "Appearance" from the current title.

Cat Perry noted that if you take out the term "Appearance" the group could be interpreted as something else. She mentioned that the Appearance aspect of the Public Land is the main thing this board discusses. Taking away "Appearance" could cause misconceptions of the name and the group.

Joe Papa said that he thinks the name should be "Public Land, Appearance & Recreation Advisory Board". All members seemed to agree on the name.

Chris Squires noted that the name is the most important for people in the town who are reading about the group and need to know what the responsibilities of the group are.

Mr. Johnson said there are a lot of projects and parks and landscaping out in the town that could be funneled to this one group for review as opposed to many different groups.

Everyone agrees with the proposed changes and new name.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Catherine Perry, seconded by Tom Barrett. **All in favor.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:12pm.

Chairman Bill McCarter

Planning Support, Taylor Miller