

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
October 10, 2023

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, 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 Interim Town Manager Kevin Rothrock, Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Jared Wright, IT Director Thomas Steele and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

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

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTE APPROVAL

Council Member Gherini made the motion to approve the minutes from the September 13, 2023, regular meeting, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

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

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Budget Amendment - #2023-15
2. Tax Release - #2023-01
3. Blowing Rock Lodge Annexation

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

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Michael Ragan – 135 Caleb Dr - Wanted to suggest naming the section of Main Street in front of Chetola after the late Kent Tarbutton. Mr. Ragan stated Mr. Tarbutton was a dear friend and thought it would be a great way to honor him. He asked Council to please consider his request.

Mayor Sellers explained that section is a NCDOT Road, he and Council could ask DOT, but couldn't guarantee it could be done.

OFFICIALS REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers - Thanked the Chamber, BRCA and volunteers that helped put on the Candidates Forum. Very pleased with the turnout and how well the event went. Reminded the citizens to vote on November 7th. Wanted to clear up some rumors and set the record straight on some numbers. The Town's current debt is \$15 million for 2022-2023, the projected debt for 2023-2024 is \$15 million. The budget for 2019 was \$11.5 million, with Council's foresight and listening to the citizens wants and needs, which included increasing police, increasing medics, water/sewer infrastructure, 24/7 operations of the Police Department with 24/7 dispatch, an SRO for our school, etc. The Council listened to the citizens, which is what they are elected to do. Reminded it costs money to run a Town and to run a Town like ours to the standard it is run, costs money. This year's budget is \$16.6 million, so to go from a \$11.5 million budget in 2019 to a \$16.6 million budget in 2023 shows we have great people who do a great job. Those are the actual numbers and he wanted to make sure those "rumors" were cleared up.
- Council Member Yount - No matter what you hear at the Candidates Forum, there will always be a Blowing Rock. He said when he started on Council to fully equip a police car cost \$22,000, now it costs \$68,000. The Town has the authority from the State of North Carolina to borrow \$93 million, the Town is way under that.
- Council Member Harwood – Stated it's actually \$133 million that the Town can borrow. He thanked the ABC Board for their \$240,000 gift to the Town - it's just a testament to how the staff and board manage that. That gift is on top of some building upgrades/improvements that they have also made. He thanked Kevin Rothrock, he's been in the Interim Town Manager role for a while, the Town has been running smoothly, staff adores him, and he really appreciates Kevin stepping into the role and undertaking that responsibility. He wanted to recognize him for that.
- Council Member Pickett - Very pleased to see all the people at the Candidate's Forum. She ran 2 years ago to unify groups and it did her heart good to see the turnout of people. It was one of the biggest forums in years.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson – Attended the Blue Ridge Community Leaders Council on September 26th. Ron Hetrick, Vice President Staffing Strategy and Senior Labor Economist for Lightcast had some interesting things to say and gave some good points. The highlights were: Women are driving the work force, we need 700,000 in the work force to start to recover, 8.8 million job openings right now, 5.5 million require no education, by the year 2030 65% of the Labor force will be over 65. Will be attending the NC League Retreat with Risk Management in Chapel Hill.
- Council Member Gherini – He has received a number of calls about speeding on Main Street near the Chetola curve coming off Hwy 321. Wanted to see if NCDOT can do anything about that.
- Town Attorney – None –
- Mayor Sellers stated Mr. Mosley will be retiring as Town Attorney after 40 years and Tucker Deal will be taking over as Town Attorney.

- Interim Manager Kevin Rothrock – Gave updates on the following: He just completed the Local Government Financial course along with Cheryl Eggers from the Admin office, will be attending the Planning conference in Durham, have interviewed several candidates for Finance Director, may do some follow up interview’s possibility next week, Memorial Park bathroom work continues, still on schedule for a completion date of mid-February. Had the monthly meeting update for water/sewer, 1,800 of waterline laid so far, 1,400 feet has been tested & water sampled, sidewalk work continues in front of the former El Rincon building down to Hill Street, comprehensive plan subcommittee met last week - working on a draft, October 30th will be a public meeting 4-6pm - more details to come. AMI installation is on pause for 2 weeks while the guys read the water meters for the upcoming billing, Capital Financing loan closes Thursday for equipment; vehicles, equipment etc., Halloween Festival is October 28th.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:35 p.m. Council Member Yount made a motion to go into closed session; NCGS 143-318.11.(6), second by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

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

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

Budget Amendment - #2023-15 – Attachment A

Tax Release – Attachment B