

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
February 13, 2024

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 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 Cat Perry, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett and Pete Gherini. Others in attendance were Interim Town Manager Kevin Rothrock, Town Attorney Tucker Deal, Town Engineer Jared Wright, Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson, Public Works Director Matt Blackburn, Landscape Director Cory Cathcart, IT Director Thomas Steele, Finance Director Tasha Brown and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner.

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 Harwood made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 9, 2024, regular meeting, seconded by Council Member Perry. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Gherini made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 9, 2024, closed session meeting, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Pickett made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 29, 30 and 31, 2024, winter retreat meetings, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made a motion to add a closed session; NCGS 143-318.11(3) to the end of the regular meeting agenda, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Budget Amendment #2024-04

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

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Comprehensive Plan Review and Adoption

Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson explained early in 2023 the Comprehensive Plan began with multiple public workshops and extensive work by the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee and consultant Benchmark Planning. At the January 18th meeting, Planning Board unanimously made a recommendation to approve the draft Comprehensive Plan Update. Mr. Johnson advised Council has a copy of the final draft document in front of them as well as a draft resolution to be read and approved if that is the desire of Council. Mr. Johnson extended his appreciation to Benchmark Planning and the Subcommittee for all the hard work they put into the plan.

Mr. Vagn Hansen with Benchmark Planning reviewed the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan including the requirement for the Town to have an adopted plan that is regularly maintained. Mr. Hansen also reviewed the project timeline with the Board.

Mayor Sellers opened the Public Hearing.

Council Member Gherini asked Mr. Johnson if he was satisfied that the plan reflected everything that needs to be in there. Mr. Johnson stated he felt it does, he explained after the feedback provided at the public open houses, the subcommittee spent a lot of time making sure everything was through and added suggestions from those public meetings.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked Mr. Johnson if with this plan it would be easier to go back and make changes to the Downtown Ordinances when the time comes to do so.

Mr. Johnson stated he felt it would and the plan is to get the subcommittee back together to start working on that process. He further stated with this updated plan the framework has been laid to start that process.

With no further questions or comments, Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Council Member Pickett.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson thanked Benchmark Planning for their work.

Mayor Sellers thanked everyone that was involved for all their hard work. He stated this plan is a lot more targeted, focused and doable.

Council Member Gherini thanked Mr. Johnson, the subcommittee and Benchmark for their hard work.

Interim Manager Rothrock thanked Benchmark. He explained the Town has used them for several projects over the years, including the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, Sign Ordinance and the 321 study. He further explained they always capture what the

community wants and are always great to work with. Interim Manager Rothrock also thanked the subcommittee for their hard work.

Mayor Sellers read the resolution.

Council Member Gherini made a motion to approve the resolution as written, seconded by Council Member Perry. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. RFPs For Tank Maintenance

Town Engineer Jared Wright gave a little background information to the Board about tank maintenance. The previous contract expired in 2018 and wasn't renewed. Since that time only minor maintenance has occurred on both water tanks. In 2023 working with Town Staff, McGill Engineers created a request for proposals for a ten (10) year annual tank maintenance contract, with an option for a five (5) year renewal, for a total of fifteen (15) years if Council elects to award the contract. December 15th five (5) solicitations were mailed out to tank maintenance contactors. Bids were due on January 25th, two (2) bids were received, American Tank and USG. Mr. Wright advised there is a significant difference in cost between the two (2) bids. Mr. Wright noted one of the contractors had mathematical errors in the calculation of their bid he wanted to make sure to point out to the Board. He further noted it didn't affect the outcome of their bid, they were still the highest bidder.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson clarified the tanks would be cleaned year one (1), year five (5) and year ten (10). Mr. Wright confirmed that was correct.

Mayor Sellers asked if the contractor would do an inspection every five (5) years. Mr. Wright stated the contractor would.

Mayor Sellers further asked how often the tank would be painted. Mr. Wright explained that was only included in year one (1) as an alternate, and exterior coating was not included in the bid for the Green Hill water tank, but that could be addressed at a later date.

After further discussion. Council Member Harwood made a motion to accept the bid from American Tank, seconded by Council Member Perry. Unanimously approved.

2. Summary of 2024 Winter Retreat

Interim Manager Rothrock gave an update from the Winter Retreat where nine topics were discussed and ranked in order from one to nine, with one being the top priority. In addition, six more topics were discussed for staff to begin working on bringing a plan and cost estimates back to Council.

3. Town Board Appointments

Council voted on each Board appointment by ballot. The following appointments

were made:

- **Planning Board:** Gasper Naquin, Steven Cohen and Joe Hubbard (ETJ)
- **Board of Adjustment:** Stephen Schiller and Brandon Walker (Full Time Members) Lee Rocamora (Alternate Member) and Joe Hubbard (ETJ)
- **ABC Board:** Sylvia Tarlton
- **TDA Board:** Dean Bullis
- **Public Land, Appearance and Recreation Board:** Alice Roess and David Goodson (2-year terms) and Carol Knapp, Aidan Waite and Deborah Boyd (3-year terms)

Council Member Gherini made a motion to approve the newly appointed board members, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

OFFICIAL REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers extended his thanks to Police Chief Aaron Miller for his years with the Town and congratulated him on his recent retirement. He extended his thanks to Nathan Kirk for accepting the Interim Police Chief position. Congratulated Charles Hardin for twenty (20) years with the Blowing Rock Chamber.
- Council Member Perry nothing to report.
- Council Member Harwood thanked Interim Manager Rothrock and staff for a great retreat. He felt Council had productive conversations. Appreciated everyone's efforts to make it a good retreat.
- Council Member Pickett nothing to report.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson thanked staff for all they did to make the retreat successful. Thanked Lonnie Webster for taking the Council pictures and getting those to Council.
- Council Member Gherini thanked staff for a great retreat. Got a call from a business owner that walks up and down Sunset Drive who is concerned with school children's safety. This person observed a child almost being hit and wanted to know why there isn't a flashing light during school crossing hours. Mayor Sellers stated a light was ordered several years ago. Public Works Director Matt Blackburn confirmed a light was in place and if the lights were not working he wasn't aware. He further confirmed he would check and investigate some flashing lights.
- Town Attorney Tucker Deal will be attending the Bi-annual Municipal Attorney's Conference at the School of Government.
- Interim Manager Kevin Rothrock reported the Blowing Rock Academy is almost open. Thanked Public Works for their hard work with snow removal over the last month. There will be a community group utilizing Town Hall this upcoming Saturday. There isn't a current policy on how we handle those groups using Town Hall, his suggestion is staff develop a policy for Council to review and adopt for

groups to following when utilizing Town space for those meetings.

Council took a 10 minute recess before going into closed session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:20 PM Council Member Perry made a motion to go into closed session, **NCGS 143- 318.11.(3)** – *To consult with attorney retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege*, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:30 p.m. Council returned to open session and with no further business, Council Member Harwood made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

Budget Amendment #2024-04 – Attachment A
Comprehensive Plan Resolution – Attachment B