

MINUTES

2010 COUNCIL RETREAT

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session on Sunday, January 17, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. at the Doubletree Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Present were Mayor J. B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Phillip Pickett, Tommy Klutz, Doug Matheson and Jim Steele. Also present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Clerk Sharon Greene and Finance Director Nicole Norman. At this time, Council reviewed the Retreat process and received an update on the 2009 accomplishments. At 9:00 p.m., Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting for the evening.

On Monday, January 18, 2010, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:10 a.m. In attendance were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Yount, Pickett, Klutz, Matheson, and Steele. Others in attendance were Town Manager Hildebran, Town Finance Director Norman, and Town Clerk Greene. On January 18, 2010 the meeting recessed at 5:45 p.m.

(Note: McGill Associates Representative Doug Chapman attended on Monday, January 18 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.)

(Note: Mr. Sid Greene, of Hardin Creek Timber Frame and Millwork gave a presentation to Council at the request of Commissioner Klutz regarding the construction of a timber frame pavilion on Wallingford Street.)

On Tuesday, January 19, 2010 Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:30 am. In attendance were Mayor Lawrence, Commissioners Yount, Pickett, Klutz, Matheson, and Steele. Others in attendance were Town Manager Hildebran, Town Finance Director Norman, and Town Clerk Greene.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a retreat to discuss key issues, initiatives and long-term planning. An issue-based process was used to help update the Town's FY 2009-10 goals and initiatives. The following major issues and topics were discussed during the sessions and the action plan below resulted:

- Continue to maintain and review Town Vision and Comprehensive Planning Initiatives.
 - Boone/Blowing Rock Alternative Transportation Plan
 - Town Pavement Plan
 - Town Master Signage Plan
 - Town Comprehensive Plan
 - MOU- Town & NCDOT US 321 Mitigation
 - Parks/Recreation & Landscape Master Plan
 - Comprehensive Financial Policy
 - Water & Sewer Capital Improvements Plan
 - Town Storm Water Plan
 - Downtown Parking Management Study

- 2009 Downtown Retail Strategy Report
- Downtown Streetscape Plan
- Capital Fleet Replacement Plan
- 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan
- Develop an Ethics Policy, per State of NC mandate, for Board consideration and schedule required training.

Board Appointments

Place appointments on February 2010 Agenda for consideration

- Planning Board (di Santi, Laughter, Pickett)
- Board of Adjustment (Klein, Whatley, Harwood)
- ABC Board (Miller)
- TDA (Tarbuton, Dyer)

Fiscal Management (Administration/Budgetary) Issues

- Continue to monitor economic conditions and pursue federal stimulus funding opportunities as warranted. (Provide forecast of revenue/expense projections for remainder of the fiscal year.)
- Provide funding for mandated increases associated with NC Local Government Retirement System, State Health Insurance Plan and Blue Ridge Electric.

Administration/ Budgetary

- Continue to monitor competitiveness of salaries and consider during FY 2010-11 budget process, including salary, insurance, benefits, etc.
- Consider the continued implementation of 5% 401K for general employees with 3% contribution beginning July 1, 2010, if economic conditions allow.
- Proceed with Town Hall improvements in current Fiscal Year and in FY 2010-11 as funding permits (1 - Exterior Town Hall Painting, 2 - Drainage, 3 - Council Chamber Audio/Visual Upgrade, and 4 - Offices Renovation).
- Continue to work on improving communication with citizens (utilizing the Town Website and web links, the bi-monthly town newsletter "*Around the Rock*", water-billing inserts and media outlets).
- Proceed with a second Request for Proposals for Town Banking Services in Spring/Summer 2010, if economic conditions warrant.
- Proceed with implementation of Environmental Conservation Plan (Green Challenge Level II), subject to cost evaluation.
- Continue to monitor utility rates to insure sufficiency and with an emphasis on conservation.
- Continue to set aside 1/3 of TDA monies for Town infrastructure (and related infrastructure debt-service).
- Continue to maintain and fund Debt Service Schedule.
- Continue to maintain and fund Fleet Capital Replacement Schedule.
- Continue to maintain and fund Town 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

- Continue to investigate the creation of a Downtown Municipal Service District to provide a funding source for streetscape improvements, restroom maintenance, beautification, parking, etc. in order to minimize impacts to residential homeowners. Partner with Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce and review during Downtown Retail Study discussions.
- Consider additional revenue sources to lessen burden on property tax. (fees, assessments, tax district, street cost recovery fee, etc.)

Tourism Issues

- Schedule annual meeting with TDA to review Tourism Annual Report (March 2010).
- Continue with implementation of Blowing Rock Retail Strategy.
- Request quarterly financial report from the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum to insure adequate oversight of joint museum/parking facility project.
- Continue to maintain public restroom facilities (Memorial Park, Town Hall, Davant Field, and eventually at both Robbins Pool and the Parking Facility located @ BRAHM). Defer action on installation of public restroom facilities at the Ice House.
- Permit the Blowing Rock TDA to utilize the Ice House as a downtown information center, with the TDA assuming any applicable costs.
- Continue to explore partnership options in the provision of parking. (school and churches)
- Continue Master Signage Plan implementation (include Parks & Recreation facilities).
- Consider additional wayfinding signage for Valley Boulevard at Possum Hollow Road and possibly Sunset Drive.

Planning Issues

- Proceed with development of a Town Center zoning district to distinguish the core downtown area from the overall Central Business zoning district. (Defer any other action on heights, setbacks, uses, etc. until further study by Town Council and Planning Board).
- Schedule a joint meeting with the Planning Board to discuss planning issues of mutual interest.
- Proceed with the implementation of parking recommendations provided in the Downtown Parking Management Study and Downtown Retail Strategy and monitor effectiveness.
- Study and provide a recommendation on the reduction of parking ratio requirements for commercial uses in the downtown area.
- Determine costs and schedule town survey for the Town Comprehensive Plan update.
- Continue to maintain Town Comprehensive Plan.
- Complete Town Land Use Code Review/Revision Project. (March/April)
- Proceed with CUP Tracking Database Software (include landscaping component & parking lot maintenance).

- Proceed with planning/inspections customer satisfaction surveys.
- Proceed with ISO Rating requirements to maintain current rating. Provide associated insurance costs data to Town Council.
- Develop a golf cart ordinance for Council consideration at the February meeting.
- Monitor growth opportunities (Possum Hollow Road area, Green Hill Road/Parkway and US 321) and future impact on Town services.
- Discontinue pursuit of Tree City USA program.
- Consider land use code amendment requiring a conceptual model, computer simulation model, or similar technique for new building projects that shows proposed buildings in relation to surrounding area, as well as investigate the possibility of Town developing a 3-D baseline data model of building heights for use by applicants, Planning Board and Town Council.
- Continue to monitor impacts of U.S. 321 Widening Project (work with tourism partners).
- Pursue improved cellular telephone coverage in the Blowing Rock area.

Public Safety Issues (Police/Emergency Services)

Emergency Services

- Continue negotiations for a county Medic Base co-location @ Fire-Rescue Station I.
- Continue to investigate fire alarm systems/sprinklers in downtown buildings to insure protection of historic structures and downtown.
- Pursue acquisition of AED's (Automated External Defibrillators) for use throughout community (Town Hall, P&R, Pool, Patrol Cars, Hotels, etc.) via grant funding and donations.
- Develop plan for installation of house numbers throughout the Town, with community group involvement.
- Improve communication about the provision of fire services throughout the community (town/volunteer relationship, areas protected, station locations, funding, etc.)

Police

- Proceed with staffing/reorganization to improve law enforcement services and morale.
- Acquire hand-held parking citation device in current budget for parking regulation enforcement and monitor effectiveness of new 3-hour parking.
- Consider equipment upgrades during FY 2010-11 budget process and pursue Mobile Data Terminals through available grant funding.
- Continue to monitor state legislative/administrative changes that affect E-911 telecommunications funding and any impact on the Blowing Rock telecommunications center.
- Conduct architectural study of old rescue building for future police use and continue to set aside funds for Police Department Building renovation.

Infrastructure Issues (Public Works/Water/Wastewater)

Public Works

- Continue Street Pavement Plan implementation (Laurel Lane to Edgewood Path, Edgewood Path, Morningside Drive, Sunset Drive @ Goforth Road, and Valley View Drive). Defer Valley View Drive paving until construction completion (check on underground utilities).
- Consider PW Warehouse during FY 2010-11 budget process and proceed with zoning use amendment to Horse Show Grounds to accommodate warehouse use.
- Develop a plan outlining existing ditches and cost for improvements. Paint white lines @ edge of pavement for safety.
- Continue Right of Way maintenance funding (via contract services) and request NCDOT to maintain state right of way.
- Continue to remove dead trees from town properties and town right of way.
- Investigate the possibility of cleaning debris (by hand) from Middle Fork of the New River.
- Communicate the use of Safe Salt on Town Streets during snow/ice events.

Water/Sewer

- Complete land exchange with U.S. Park Service for Town Reservoir property and avoid encumbrances that would prevent the exchange.

Capital Projects

- Continue to investigate the possibility of using the town-owned lot on Clark Street across from Robbins Pool for re-location of the Town Reclamation Recovery Center. Seek grant funding, if available. Proceed with rezoning to accommodate use.
- Continue to implement Water/Sewer Capital Improvements Plan and consider additional improvements as funds allow with the following order of priority:
 - Proceed with the Boone/Blowing Rock Water Interconnection Project CIP Phase III and continue to seek stimulus funding assistance. (March 2010 – construction to begin).
 - Proceed with Water Plant Filter improvements as mandated by NCDENR.
 - Proceed with next phase of Laurel Park sewer extension plan.
 - Proceed with Globe Road/Wallingford Street sewer extension plan, as funds allow.
 - Proceed with Gideon Ridge water/sewer improvement plan and set aside funds as available.
 - Continue to pursue stimulus funding for CIP Phase II (WWTP Misc. Improvements, Air Piping and Diffusers in Aeration Tanks, and Generator).
 - Continue to pursue stimulus funding for CIP Phase IV (WTP Sedimentation Basin/Piping).
 - Evaluate Town Reservoir depth and should cleaning be required, defer until interconnection project complete.
- Initiate exterior water plant appearance improvements (painting & plantings).
- Continue to monitor Downtown Streetscape Plan – Phase I Project (with expected completion in Spring 2010).

- Continue to pursue NCDOT Enhancement funding for Downtown Streetscape Plan – Phase II.
- Consider funding Downtown Streetscape Plan – Town Hall area for possible construction in the fall 2010/spring 2011, including Main Street drainage @ Town Hall.
- Continue to request utility providers (AT&T, BREMCO, and Charter) to consolidate/remove overhead lines where feasible.
- Continue to monitor Robbins Pool Improvement Project construction (with expected completion Memorial Day 2010).
- Continue with implementation of Storm Water Master Plan – and pursue grant opportunities and allocate funding as economic conditions warrant.
- Investigate drainage on Wallingford Street @ BRAHM location.
- Proceed with the development of a Comprehensive Sidewalk Plan (Planning Department).

Parks & Recreation/Town Beautification Issues

- Continue P&R Master Plan implementation, with emphasis on tennis court fence. (Check on possibly rehabilitation of fence).
- Conduct architectural study of old fire building for future recreation use as funding allows.
- Continue to work with TDA representatives on holidays decorations.
- Continue to work with BRAAC on overall beautification of Town.
- Discuss implementation of a second Town Clean-up Day for later in summer with BRACC.
- Continue to improve overall Downtown Beautification & General Maintenance.
 - Install domed lids on trash receptacles.
 - Enforce solid waste collection regulations regarding the placement of refuse on downtown sidewalks.
 - Inspect newspaper racks to determine functional operation and possible mechanism replacement.
 - Consider sweeping streets/sidewalks more often (possible sidewalk vacuum).
- Investigate Glen Burney Trail transfer to US Park Service. Consider adding distance markers and improved signage.

Other

- Initiate a Customer Service training program for all employees.
- Continue to monitor the impacts of the following – Green Park Inn, Hayes Performing Arts Center, BRAHM, Chamber, Wine/Culinary Project, BR Commons & Healthcare/Hospital Planning.
- Continue dialogue with American Legion on future of building and review town lease. (Consider future amphitheater location.)
- Work with the Blowing Rock Fire-Rescue Auxiliary in the establishment of an Emergency Shelter location in Blowing Rock.

- Communicate ice storm debris removal status to citizens.
- Remove Speed Hump signs from Ransom Street.
- Provide citizens with information regarding results of police check points.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. on Tuesday, January 19, 2010.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk