

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

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 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, Council Members Cat Perry, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett and Pete Gherini. Others in attendance were Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Tucker Deal, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Finance Director Tasha Brown, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Interim Police Chief Nathan Kirk, Landscape Director Cory Cathcart, Town Engineer Doug Chapman 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

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made the motion to approve the minutes from the July 9, 2024, regular and closed session meetings, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Gherini made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 12, 2024, open and closed session special meeting, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Harwood made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 23, 2024, special meeting, seconded by Council Member Perry. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Sellers explained a few changes to the meeting agenda: the new Blowing Rock School Principal, Madison Hollar, will speak after Public comments. Under Presentations End Overdose in Watauga County will be moved to the last item on the Regular Agenda.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to move the Annie Cannon Grant Resolution off Consent Agenda and to the second item on Regular Agenda, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the regular meeting agenda with the changes, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. USDA Reimbursement Resolution**
- 2. Caldwell County Animal Control**
- 3. Daughters of the American Revolution Proclamation – For Constitution Week**

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

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Steven Cohen – 201 Chestnut Drive wanted to express his thanks to Town Council for all the hard work and let them know they are doing a great job.

Madison Hollar, the new Blowing Rock School Principal introduced herself to Council and residents in attendance. Ms. Hollar gave a little background on herself and mentioned she looks forward to a working partnership with the school and the Town.

PRESENTATIONS

- 1. Foothills Conservancy – Johns River Headwaters**

Andrew Kota with the Foothills Conservancy gave a presentation on the Headwaters GTSP Trail Grant proposal.

REGULAR AGENDA

- 1. Capital Debt Financing**

Town Manager Shane Fox explained as part of the 2024-2025 approved budget, the Town Council approved staff soliciting bids for a Capital Loan to purchase vehicles and equipment requested in the annual budget. The total for those items was \$570,000. The Town publicly advertised and solicited bids on July 16th with all bids due August 6th. A total of seven (7) bids were received, the lowest bidder was Hunting Bank with a four (4) year term at 3.74% interest rate.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

- 2. Annie Cannon – Grant Resolution**

Town Manager Fox stated recently the Village Foundation of Blowing Rock has been working to develop a project to transform the Annie Cannon Gardens and the Glen Burney Trail for generations to come. The concept would reconfigure the entrance to the Annie Cannon Gardens and construct a new trailhead for the Glen Burney Trail. As of now, this project is only in the concept stages with more design work and ultimate approval that must be done through the Town Council and the Public Lands and Recreation Advisory Board. Funding for the conceptual project could come from a series of sources, including the Village Foundation, private donors, and grant monies. A potential grant would be The Great Trails State Grant. The GTS grant is an annual grant that allows local governments to apply for up to \$500,000 in grant monies for trail construction and trail maintenance.

This grant could be used for the development of the conceptual project including construction costs. The grant requires a match of 50% for every dollar awarded. The grant match could come from the series of funding options, including the Village Foundation, donors, etc. The current grant application deadline is September 3, 2024. The High Country Council of Governments has agreed to write and apply on behalf of the Town and the Village Foundation for the grant. The grant writing and submittal, along with the administration of the grant would be performed by the HCCOG for a fee of \$10,000, but only if the grant is awarded, of which the fee would be paid by the grant itself, not the Town. If not awarded, the HCCOG would not administer a fee. For the HCCOG to proceed with writing and submitting the grant application, the Town Council must give official approval of the HCCOG to proceed. No obligation would be incurred by the Town for allowing for the grant to be submitted.

Council Member Pickett asked since it's a concept if the Town applies on that concept would the Town be locked into that concept if the grant were to be approved since it's not yet been brought before any entities of the Town.

Manager Fox stated it would not and there would be no obligations.

Council Member Pickett asked what the term on the grant would be if awarded.

Manager Fox stated it would be thirty-six (36) months.

Manager Fox explained this is a matching grant up to \$500,000 and the foundation is looking at fundraising opportunities to help with the matching funds if the grant were to be awarded.

Mr. John Aldridge spoke on behalf of the Village Foundation and stated the fundraising is just getting started and this is in the conceptual stage. Mr. Aldridge further stated the total estimated cost of the project is a million dollars so the grant and fundraising is going to be very important.

Manager Fox mentioned the request is for Council to approve to allow the HCCOG to move forward with writing of the grant and submittal process.

Council Member Perry made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

3. End Overdose in Watauga Day

Mary McKinney gave a brief presentation on End Overdose in Watauga County and asked Council to consider approval of a Proclamation to End Overdose in Watauga County.

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

OFFICIAL REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers – The State of the Town will be Thursday, August 15th at 5:30 p.m. at BRAHM.
- Council Member Perry – None
- Council Member Harwood – None
- Council Member Pickett – None
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson – Reminded everyone Groovy Nights, a fundraiser for the Blowing Rock Community Foundation, will be August 18th, 20th and 23rd at the Blowing Rock Country Club.
- Council Member Gherini – Expressed his condolences to the Penninger family with the passing of Chester. As the chairman of the Economic Development Commission, he hosted a meeting of local and state level representatives. In attendance were Representative Destin Hall, Representative Ray Pickett and County Commissioner Todd Castle – all gave detailed information of what is going on in their respective areas. Manager Fox acted as the facilitator of the meeting. Discussion included the upcoming election, budget for next year, upcoming bills, a lot of discussion about tourism, how it effects this area, the possible change in the TDA's 2/3's 1/3's funding.
- Town Attorney Tucker Deal – None
- Town Manager Shane Fox – Gave updates on the Main Street project – Maple Street, 221 and Green Street, Laurel Lane – Mayview HOA, Broyhill Lake spillway, Chestnut sewer progress, Grandfather lift station – will be soon, USDA – work continues on design, and the Police Chief hiring progress.

Upcoming meeting dates – Watauga EDC meeting August 15th at 1:00 pm
 ABC Board meeting August 15th at 2:00 p.m.
 Planning Board meeting August 15th at 5:30 p.m.
 State of the Town meeting August 15th at 5:30 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:15 PM Council Member Perry made a motion to go into closed session, **NCGS 143-318.11.(a)(3) Attorney/Client privilege and NCGS 143-318.11(a)(5) – Discussion of potential property acquisition**, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:15 p.m. the Council returned to open session and with no further business, Council Member Pickett made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
 Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____
 Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

USDA Reimbursement Resolution – Attachment A

Caldwell County Animal Control – Attachment B
Daughters of the American Revolution Proclamation – Attachment C
Foothills Conservancy – John River Headwaters – Power Point – Attachment D
Capital Debt Financing Resolution – Attachment E
End Overdose Proclamation – Attachment F