

## MINUTES

### 2011 COUNCIL RETREAT

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session on Sunday, January 16, 2011 at 2:40 p.m. at the Doubletree Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Present were Mayor J. B. Lawrence, Commissioners Phillip Pickett, Tommy Klutz, Doug Matheson and Jim Steele. Commissioner Yount was unable to attend the Retreat due to family illness, but was present via on-line Skype. Also present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran and Town Clerk Sharon Greene. Finance Director Nicole Norman was unable to attend due to medical reasons. At this time, Council reviewed the Retreat process and received an update on the 2010 accomplishments. At 5:30 p.m., Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting for the evening.

On Monday, January 17, 2011, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:10 a.m. In attendance were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Pickett, Klutz, Matheson, and Steele. Present on-line was Commissioner Yount. Others in attendance were Town Manager Hildebran and Town Clerk Greene. On January 17, 2011 the meeting recessed at 5:30 p.m.

(Note: McGill Associates Representative Doug Chapman attended on Monday, January 17 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.)

On Tuesday, January 18, 2011 Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:15 am. In attendance were Mayor Lawrence, Commissioners Pickett, Klutz, Matheson, and Steele. Present on-line was Commissioner Yount. Others in attendance were Town Manager Hildebran 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 2010-11 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 & Comprehensive Planning Initiatives, including:
  - 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

**Board Appointments**

Place appointments on February 2011 Agenda for consideration

- Planning Board (D. Harwood, D. Pegram, L. Stripling)
- Board of Adjustment (R. Oberle, C. Davant, T. Drumheller)
- ABC Board (S. Greene)
- TDA (L. Mattar)

**Planning Issues**

- Fund a town survey in the FY 2011-12 Budget for use in the update of the Town Comprehensive Plan.
- Continue to maintain the current Town Comprehensive Plan.
- Proceed with next phase of Town Center/Central Business zoning discussion (heights, setbacks, uses, etc.).
- Proceed with next phase of Town Land Use Code Review/Revision Project.
- Continue to implement recommendations of the Downtown Parking Management Study and Downtown Retail Strategy and monitor effectiveness.
- Complete CUP Tracking Database Software (include landscaping component, parking lot maintenance and site plans).
- Implement the proposed planning/inspections customer satisfaction surveys.
- Monitor growth opportunities (Possum Hollow Road area, Green Hill Road/Parkway and US 321) and future impact on Town services.
- Continue to monitor impacts of U.S. 321 Widening Project (work with tourism partners).
- Pursue improved cellular telephone coverage in the Blowing Rock area.
- Defer action and continue to study and acquire more information on wind energy, especially regarding noise, appearance, safety and long-term maintenance.
- Maintain and aggressively enforce the Short-term Rental (28 day) Ordinance. Inform and educate the public on why the ordinance was adopted in 1984 and where short-term rental is permitted, using both "*Around the Rock*" newsletter and letters to all realtors.

**Fiscal Management (Administration/Budgetary) Issues**

- Continue to monitor economic conditions and pursue funding opportunities as warranted.
- Provide funding for mandated increases associated with NC Local Government Retirement System and State Health Insurance Plan
- Fund increases in fuel and propane expenses.

### Administration/ Budgetary

- Proceed with Town Hall improvements in current Fiscal Year and in FY 2011-12 as funding permits (1 - Exterior Town Hall Painting, 2 - Drainage, 3 - Record Storage, 4 - Council Chamber Audio/Visual Upgrade, and 5 - Offices Renovation).
- Evaluate costs/benefits of electronic Town Council packets and any associated equipment.
- Evaluate costs/benefits of town services electronic billing statements and payments.
- Evaluate costs/benefits for work order software.
- Proceed with implementation of Environmental Conservation Plan (Green Challenge Level III), subject to cost evaluation.
- Proceed with a second Request for Proposals for Town Banking Services, once economic conditions warrant.
- Continue to monitor competitiveness of salaries and consider during FY 2011-12 budget process, including salary, insurance, benefits, etc.
- Consider the continued implementation of 5% 401K for general employees with an employee matching contribution beginning July 1, 2011, if economic conditions allow.
- 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).
- Continue to monitor utility rates to insure sufficiency and with an emphasis on conservation, with possible reduction in the interconnect fee with corresponding offset in water/sewer rates.
- 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.)

### Parks & Recreation/Town Beautification Issues

- Continue P&R Master Plan implementation.
- Investigate possible grants for solar energy for Robbins Swimming Pool.
- Continue to work with TDA representatives on holidays decorations.
- Continue to work with BRAAC on overall beautification of Town, with emphasis on Sunset Drive at BR School.
- Continue to improve overall Downtown Beautification & General Maintenance.
  - Consider improvements at Broyhill Park.

- Consider sweeping streets/sidewalks more often (possible sidewalk vacuum).
- Contact Watauga County Schools regarding student construction trade assistance with Robbins Pool picnic shelter and grills.
- Review schedule of fees/charges for Summer Camp and Robbins Pool for FY 2011-12.

### **Tourism Issues**

- Schedule annual meeting with TDA to review Tourism Annual Report (March 2011).
- Continue with implementation of Blowing Rock Retail Strategy.
- Continue to monitor the construction of the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum and Parking Facility and review quarterly financial data to insure adequate oversight of joint museum/parking facility project.
- Continue to maintain public restroom facilities (Memorial Park, Town Hall, Davant Field, Robbins Pool and the upcoming Parking Facility located @ BRAHM).
- Permit the Blowing Rock TDA to utilize the Ice House as a downtown information center, with the TDA assuming any applicable costs.
- Continue Master Signage Plan implementation (include Parks & Recreation facilities).
- Continue to support the proposed Middle Fork Greenway Project connecting Blowing Rock and Boone.

### **Public Safety Issues (Police/Emergency Services)**

- Proceed with investigation/implementation of dispatch consolidation with Watauga County and consider pursuing the hybrid alternative of customer service staffing.

### **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.
- Continue to 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.
- Continue to improve installation of house numbers throughout the Town, with community group involvement.
- Consider staffing as budget allows and work with funding partners.

### **Police**

- Continue to monitor parking enforcement and implementation of the Parking Management Study recommendations.
- Consider equipment upgrades during FY 2011-12 budget process and pursue additional Mobile Data Terminals through available grant funding.
- Increase foot patrols in downtown areas during the peak tourism season and visit all businesses.

## **Infrastructure Issues (Public Works/Water/Wastewater)**

### **Public Works**

- Continue Street Pavement Plan implementation (Possum Hollow – Valley Blvd to BREMCO substation, Green Hill Road @ Fairway Woods, Wonderland Trail – Laurel Lane to Valley View, Forest Lane and Park Avenue). Consider Valley View Drive and Maple Street Lot in current Fiscal Year.
- Consider costs/benefits of sealing town streets and sidewalks.
- Continue to operate a residential curbside recycling program and investigate post office recycling.
- 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. Check on dead tree on Sunset Drive @ BR School.
- Develop a plan outlining existing ditches and cost for improvements. Continue to paint white lines @ edge of pavement for safety. (Request engineer to evaluate Possum Hollow Road.)
- Investigate the possibility of expanding Woodlawn Cemetery.
- Investigate/explore used public works equipment.
- Review street sweeping options.
- Review guardrails throughout town.
- Review one-way on Maple Street.
- Follow-up with BREMCO regarding light pole straightening and issues concerning decorations.

### **Water/Sewer**

- Complete land exchange with U.S. Park Service for Town Reservoir property.
- Evaluate costs/benefits of electronic water metering equipment.

### **Capital Projects**

- Continue evaluation of Town Facilities Improvements Study (Public Works, Police and Parks & Recreation) and begin initial implementation with the following order of priority:
  - 1) Pursue acquisition of property for Public Works Facility expansion with BR Charity Horse Show.
  - 2) Proceed with Phase One of Public Works Facility Improvements –Salt Bin Storage.
  - 3) Pursue P&R Storage at the lower level of the BRAHM Parking Structure.
  - 4) Continue evaluation of Public Works, Police and Parks & Recreation facility recommendations.
- Continue to implement WATER/Sewer Capital Improvements Plan and consider additional improvements as funds allow with the following order of priority:
  - 1) Complete the Boone/Blowing Rock Water Interconnection Project CIP Phase III.
  - 2) Proceed with Globe Road & Court/Wallingford Street sewer extension.

- 3) Proceed with Main Street Sewer extension.
- 4) Proceed with US NCDOT Betterments, and pursue additional assistance from NCDOT for sewer outfall impacts.
- 5) Weatherize bar screen at Waste Treatment Plant.
- 6) Proceed with CIP Phase II (WWTP Misc. Improvements, Air Piping and Diffusers in Aeration Tanks, and Generator) with state loan funds.
- 7) Obtain easement for next phase of Laurel Park sewer extension, and proceed once funds are available.
- 8) Proceed with Gideon Ridge water/sewer improvement plan, and proceed once funds are available.
- 9) Re-evaluate Town Reservoir underwater depth.

- Continue to address inflow/infiltration sewer issues. (BR Country Club area and Cornish Road/Ransom Street area)
- Initiate exterior water plant appearance improvements (painting & plantings).
- Proceed with Downtown Streetscape Plan Phase II in spring 2011 – Town Hall area and NCDOT Drainage.
- Consider funding Downtown Streetscape Plan Phase III – St. Mary’s to Storie Street area for possible construction in the fall 2011/spring 2012. (No bulb-outs)
- Continue to pursue NCDOT Enhancement funding for Downtown Streetscape Plan.
- Continue to request utility providers (AT&T, BREMCO, and Charter) to consolidate/remove overhead lines where feasible.
- Continue with implementation of Storm Water Master Plan – and pursue grant opportunities and allocate funding as economic conditions allow.
- Continue to pursue grant funding for Pool picnic shelter.

**Other**

- 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.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m. on Tuesday, January 18, 2011.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_  
**J.B. Lawrence**

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sharon Greene, Town Clerk**

