

**Town of Blowing Rock  
Board of Commissioners  
Departmental Meeting- February 28, 2011**

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held an annual departmental meeting on Monday, February 28, 2011 at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock. In attendance were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Phillip Pickett, Tommy Klutz, Doug Matheson and Jim Steele. Commissioner Albert Yount was unable to attend due to family illness. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

**FISCAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

Town Manager Hildebran and Finance Director Nicole Norman reviewed the budgetary issues and priorities for the Administrative/Finance Department. Mr. Hildebran maintained the economic conditions would continue to be monitored and funding would be pursued as warranted. Mr. Hildebran spoke briefly regarding issues such as decreased sales tax revenue, Powell Bill funds, utility franchise taxes, etc. and their affect on the budget. He also mentioned the anticipated increase in employee health insurance coverage as well as retirement benefit costs. Mr. Hildebran stated that the NC General Assembly was considering a moratorium on annexation in the future which would have an effect on future growth.

Mr. Hildebran advised, considering the decrease in revenues mentioned previously, the current budget looked good and that tax collections for 2010 were up one-half percent from the previous year's collection rate. Mr. Hildebran said as funding permitted, improvements such as the exterior painting of Town Hall, drainage issues and record storage would be done and staff would continue to monitor the list of priorities and complete items listed as funds became available.

**PARKS & RECREATION/TOWN BEAUTIFICATION ISSUES**

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown met with Council to discuss issues and accomplishments within her department. She advised that she was in the process of pursuing grant funding for solar energy in order to heat the Robbins Pool, but at the present time she did not have any cost figures for consideration. Ms. Brown also mentioned that she had met with Blue Ridge Electric regarding the leaning light poles along North Main Street. The need for more Christmas decorations and the cost was briefly discussed, as well as working with BRAAC on ideas to beautify the area along Sunset Drive at Blowing Rock School. Ms. Brown advised that employees in her department had been concentrating on the beautification at Broyhill Park by cleaning flowerbeds, cutting dead shrubbery, etc. Commissioner Klutz stressed the need for signage at Mayview Lake each winter directing pedestrians to stay off of the frozen lake. Ms. Brown stated her department had erected signage pertaining to this issue and would continue to do so.

Ms. Brown mentioned that she continued to work on donations of time and materials to build the picnic shelter at Robbins Pool and had spoken to several businesses/organizations regarding this issue as well as Watauga High School.

Ms. Brown presented Council with a fee increase proposal for Facility Rentals, the Summer Day Camp Program and Robbins Pool to better off-set the costs for these programs. Ms. Brown stated she had checked with other recreation departments in the surrounding area, and the fees currently being charged were less than in other places. She emphasized more staff was needed at Robbins Pool due to its overwhelming popularity in order to insure the safety of those utilizing the pool. With the newly proposed fee increases the loss in revenue for the Summer Day Camp Program and Robbins Pool would be significantly less than in previous years.

Commissioner Matheson made a motion for approval of the fees schedule as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pickett. Unanimously approved.

#### **Parks & Recreation Fee Schedule – Exhibit A**

Ms. Brown also presented Council with a revised job description for the Park Maintenance and Landscape Assistant for their approval. Commissioner Klutz made a motion to approve the job description as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pickett. Unanimously approved.

#### **Park Maintenance and Landscape Assistant Job Description – Exhibit B**

### **TOURISM ISSUES**

At this time, Council met with members of the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to discuss tourism issues. TDA members present were Chairman Kent Tarbuton, Rob Dyer and Phillip Pickett, Ex-Officio members Scott Hildebran and Nicole Norman. TDA Director, Tracy Brown and Assistant Director Amanda Lugenbell were also present. TDA Members Dean Bullis and Lynn Drury were unable to attend.

Mr. Brown began the meeting with a power point presentation. He advised that Smith Advertising Consultants from Fayetteville had been hired by the TDA to conduct focus groups to give the authority information and direction on advertising.

Mr. Brown also spoke briefly regarding a Q.R. code located on the advertisements that visitors could download on their smart phones giving directions and information about the destination.

Mr. Brown mentioned that Blowing Rock had been voted “North Carolina’s Prettiest Small Town” and 15 different press releases had gone out regarding this designation. He also commented that the Weather Channel visit had generated \$12 million earned media for the State of North Carolina of which Blowing Rock played a significant role according to the North Carolina Division of Tourism and there had been 33 million viewers of this Weather Channel segment.

According to Mr. Brown, occupancy tax revenue had increased slightly in 2010. He also reported that 50,000 visitor guides and 25,000 shopping maps had been distributed and there had been 14,167 visitors to the visitor center and 493,349 website visitors.

Mr. Brown acknowledged the TDA had partnered with the Chamber of Commerce to fund a special events coordinator and the TDA also continued to have a great partnership with other local chambers, TDA's, etc.

Council thanked Mr. Brown for his presentation. TDA Chairperson Kent Tarbutton, also spoke briefly stating the TDA was anticipating a 10% increase in the travel industry in 2011. Commissioner Steele asked, based on current events, how the TDA would be impacted. Mr. Tarbutton commented that he did foresee an impact especially with the elevated gas prices, but he felt that business travel was making a comeback which was also a good sign.

Town Manager Hildebran reminded everyone of the Intergovernmental Meeting to be held on March 28, 2011 where tourism would be the main topic.

**OTHER**

Mr. Kent Tarbutton gave a brief update on the Hayes Performing Arts Center. He stated that deficiencies in the building were being addressed at the present time. He also stated there were two different parties interested in acquiring the building, but another appraisal was needed.

Ms. Joann Mitchell updated everyone on the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum project. She stated the project was progressing on schedule with a proposed opening date of October 1, 2011. Ms. Mitchell announced that funding had been raised to cover building construction costs and that Boone Construction would continue to work diligently on this wonderful addition to the community.

**ADJOURN**

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

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

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

**ATTACHMENTS** (February 28, 2011)  
Parks & Recreation Fee Schedule – Exhibit A

Park Maintenance and Landscape Assistant Job Description – Exhibit B