

MINUTES
Board of Commissioners
Departmental Meeting- March 1, 2011

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners continued their annual departmental meetings on Tuesday, March 1, 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 4:00 p.m.

PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES (Police/Emergency Services)

EMS Director Kent Graham discussed several issues within his department. He stated that negotiations continued regarding a County Medic Base location in Blowing Rock. He advised that the west end of the County was requesting a medic base at no cost and he felt that Blowing Rock should not have to pay in order to receive a medic base in this area of the County. He advised that 50% of all calls were located in the County with the remaining 50% being inside Boone town limits.

Mr. Graham said that his department was also continuing to investigate fire alarm systems/sprinklers in downtown buildings to insure protection of historic structures. He further stated that it was not mandated that buildings have sprinkler systems and his department continued to educate and provide information to businesses. He advised that his department was also continuing acquisition of AED's (Automated External Defibrillators) for use throughout the community. At the present time, through grant funding and donations received, two AEDs had been purchased with future plans to acquire one per year until adequately protected. The importance of house numbering was briefly discussed. It was suggested that this topic be mentioned in the next town newsletter urging residents to install the proper house numbers to adequately insure should they experience the need for E-911 assistance; that their home could be found in a timely manner.

Mr. Graham also spoke of his department's need for further staffing to aid with training and educating volunteer fire fighters.

Police Chief Eric Brown joined the meeting to discuss investigation/implementation of dispatch consolidation with Watauga County and to consider pursuing the hybrid alternative of customer service staffing. Mr. Graham and Chief Brown stated that initially they were not in favor of the consolidated dispatch program, but after visiting and speaking with other areas that had already converted; they felt this was the most feasible solution to the issue due to Blowing Rock's loss of E-911 funding. According to Chief Brown and Mr. Graham, it would be best to move forward and save money now

rather than to be forced to convert later. If the Town chose the hybrid alternative, there would be an employee/records clerk present to provide service to the public during the day. Commissioner Steele asked how much the Town would save if they converted to the consolidated dispatch. Mr. Graham and Chief Brown advised that \$100,000 would be saved immediately, plus another \$60,000 to \$100,000 on capital equipment updates. They also advised that the Town of Boone was considering the consolidated dispatch even though they had not lost their E-911 funding. Mr. Brown expressed in his opinion the taxpayers of Blowing Rock would get better and quicker service with the consolidation. Chief Brown also advised it would be one year or longer before the consolidation would be completed and suggested that the town keep their equipment after the consolidation.

Chief Brown also spoke regarding the new parking ticket handhelds that were acquired in 2010. He stated that parking ticket revenue was down due to the increase in warning tickets being given as well as the increase in parking from 2 hours to 3 hours. He expressed that his department was looking forward to using the handhelds this season. Chief Brown also mentioned that five mobile data terminals for police cars had been acquired through grant funding and grants had been submitted for additional units. He mentioned that he would like to proceed with the architectural study and plans for improving the Police Department.

Other issues discussed were plans for increasing police foot patrol in the downtown area, visiting businesses as well as looking at the cost for acquiring a records retention system on DVD. Overall, Chief Brown expressed that his department was progressing positively.

PLANNING ISSUES

Due to the lack of time, the departmental meeting with Planning Director Kevin Rothrock will be held at a later date.

INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES (Public Works/Water/Watewater)

Town Engineer Doug Chapman, WTP/WWTP Supervisor Tom McRary, Public Works Director Mike Wilcox and Assistant Public Works Director Matt Blackburn were present to discuss various issues.

Mr. Hildebran mentioned that he had met with the Park Service regarding the land exchange and an appraisal would be needed on both parcels before the exchange could be transferred.

Mr. Chapman updated Council on various capital projects. He advised that there was continued evaluation of Town Facilities Improvements Study and listed the priorities in which the study would be implemented.

Mr. Chapman discussed implementation of the Water/Sewer Capital Improvements Plan. He advised that the Boone/Blowing Rock Water Interconnection Project was almost complete. Also, discussed were plans to extend sewer in several areas of town.

Mr. Chapman stated that they were currently in the process of getting bids for this project. Also discussed were the US 321 NCDOT Betterments, pursuing additional assistance from NCDOT utility betterments for sewer outfall impacts, as well as weatherizing the bar screen at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, etc.

Among other issues discussed were plans to continue addressing inflow/infiltration sewer issues, initiate exterior water plant appearance improvements, and proceeding with the Downtown Streetscape Plan Phase II and the drainage issue in front of Town Hall.

Commissioner Klutz voiced his desire for another water tank for the Town. Mr. Hildebran stated that staff would look into his request.

Mr. Wilcox updated Council regarding the street pavement plan and the cost/benefits of sealing town streets and sidewalks. Commissioner Steele asked when the streets would be reevaluated again. Mr. Hildebran advised the Town ordinarily evaluated the street conditions every 10 years and it had been about 8 years to date.

Mr. Wilcox advised that his department continued with the right-of-way maintenance, repainting the yellow and white lines on several streets, street sweeping, smoking manholes, etc.

Other issues mentioned were the need for a tractor, the need for a guardrail on West View Drive, etc. Commissioner Klutz also suggested a guardrail be installed along Cone Road also.

Mr. Hildebran advised the NCDOT widening project was scheduled to begin soon and would commence on the north end of town. Also bids would be received on March 15th for the next phase of the Streetscape Plan. He mentioned that staff was working with the Horse Show regarding the needed property for Phase One for a salt bin.

ADJOURN

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J. B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk