

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting- April 11, 2011

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Monday, April 11, 2011 at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock NC. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Phil Pickett, Tommy Klutz, Doug Matheson, and Jim Steele. Others attending were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

UPDATES

Town Manager Hildebran began by updating Council regarding changes to the employee/retiree health and dental insurance and how these changes impacted the upcoming budget year. A proposed 3% increase to the Town's property/liability insurance partially offset by a proposed decrease in the Worker's Comp Insurance of approximately 5% was mentioned.

Mr. Hildebran also mentioned the census numbers for Blowing Rock had decreased which would affect the amount of sales tax received. There would also be a decrease in Powell Bill funds as well as beer and wine tax revenues. In addition to these decreases, the property tax levy would be lower due to property acquisitions by NCDOT for the widening project.

PLANNING ISSUES

Due to the lack of time during scheduled Council/Departmental meetings, Planning Issues were not previously discussed; therefore, Planning Director Rothrock updated Council regarding various issues in his department. Mr. Rothrock commented the Comprehensive Plan Survey would be sent in the coming year in order to gather information from the public on their vision for Blowing Rock. He advised the last survey was sent in 2000.

Mr. Rothrock mentioned the Land Use Code had been reformatted and simplified to help make it easier for the public to understand; and his department planned to continue to investigate a conditional zoning approach to project approval which would be presented to Council when completed.

Mr. Rothrock briefly discussed the Town Center as well as updates to the Town's GIS system. He invited everyone to visit the Town's website to view the updates. Mayor Lawrence stated he had visited the website and found the updates to be very helpful.

Mr. Hildebran advised the Hwy 321 Widening Project had been pushed back until fall; but Blue Ridge Electric would begin work on the electrical lines this summer. He also mentioned that NCDOT would be holding their 80% completion meeting with Council sometime later this year to update everyone on the project. Mr. Hildebran advised the Town would be required to pay approximately \$168,000 in anticipated water/sewer betterments during the project for improvements identified thus far in the project design.

Commissioner Steele suggested the Planning Board review the concept of shared driveways between lots and to encourage this by crediting them with 2 extra parking spaces. Commissioner Klutz suggested the Town purchase property along Hwy. 321 for future parking. Other members of Council did not feel this would be feasible.

Mayor Lawrence asked for Council's feelings on changing the regular Council meeting time from 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. permanently. Commissioner Klutz made a motion to change the regular Council meeting time from 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Matheson seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

At this time, Council moved to the Council Chambers for the Chamber of Commerce Wine and Culinary Study presentation. Mr. Cobb Milner of the Economic Development Committee advised the idea of having a wine/culinary center in Blowing Rock had been explored by their committee. He stated a wine/culinary center would greatly benefit the economic development of Blowing Rock without competing with existing facilities.

Mr. Milner then introduced Mr. John Aldridge who began a power point presentation. Mr. Aldridge advised there was a need for a wine/culinary center in the area because it would extend the tourist season, bring resources to the area that are not here at the present time and bring money into the community. According to Mr. Aldridge, the concept would not compete for funding of other projects. He advised the wine and culinary concept would be a State project, not a Blowing Rock project and while exploring the idea for a center of this type, members of their committee had traveled around the State viewing other wine/culinary operations. Mr. Aldridge commented that while exploring the idea of such a center, a great deal of interest had been generated for a wine/culinary center in the Blowing Rock area. He also mentioned the committee had explored several locations for a center that he could not disclose at that time.

Mr. Aldridge continued the presentation with a conceptual design of the wine/culinary center. He also briefly discussed the proposed cost of the center and various ways it would be utilized. He stated a center in this area would receive the support of the wine industry.

Mr. Aldridge asked for Council's support for the wine and culinary center in concept only. Mr. Aldridge asked if a resolution could possibly be drafted before April 28, 2011.

Mayor Lawrence asked other Council members if they would agree to support a wine and culinary center in concept only with a resolution as requested by Mr. Aldridge. It was the consensus of Council to direct Town Manager Hildebran to draft a resolution of

support in concept only to be reviewed during their regular meeting to be held on Tuesday, April 12, 2011. Council also asked that the resolution define that their support was for the concept only; they were not committing to contributing money or land.

Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Aldridge for the presentation.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk