

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Board of Commissioners
2012 Annual Retreat

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session on Sunday, January 15, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at the Doubletree Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Present were Mayor J. B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Dan Phillips, Tommy Klutz, Doug Matheson and Jim Steele. Also present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Finance Director Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Sharon Greene. At this time, Council reviewed the Retreat process and received an update on the 2010 accomplishments. At 9:00 p.m., Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting for the evening.

On Monday, January 16, 2012, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:10 a.m. In attendance were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Tommy Klutz, Dan Phillips, Doug Matheson, and Jim Steele. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Finance Director Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

(Note: McGill Associates Representative Doug Chapman attended on Monday, January 16 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:40 p.m.)

At 4:50 p.m. on Monday, January 16, 2012 Commissioner Phillips moved to enter into closed session pursuant to N.C. General Statutes 143.318.11(6) to discuss personnel matters. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Klutz. Unanimously approved. Town Manager Hildebran, Finance Director Norman and Town Clerk Greene were asked to exit the meeting.

On Tuesday, January 17, 2012 Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:30 am. In attendance were Mayor Lawrence, Commissioners Yount, Phillips, Klutz, Matheson, and Steele. Others in attendance were Town Manager Hildebran, Finance Director Norman and Town Clerk Greene.

Each year a Town Council retreat is held to discuss key issues, initiatives and long-term planning. In 2012 (January 15-17), an issue-based process was used to help update the Town's FY 2012-13 goals and initiatives. The 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.
 - 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 2012 Agenda for consideration

- Planning Board (J. West, A. Roess, B. Fairbetter - ETJ)
- Board of Adjustment (J. Starnes, T. Ford - ALT, L. Faulkner - ALT, T. Story - ETJ)
- ABC Board (D. Greene)
- TDA (D. Bullis, D. Matheson - Council)

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 and fund increases in energy, fuel and propane expenses.

Administration/ Budgetary

- Proceed with Town Hall improvements in current Fiscal Year and in FY 2012-13 as funding permits (1 – Interior Window Painting, 2 – Building Roof, 3 – Meeting Video/Audio [Charter Cable], 4 – Council Chamber Audio/Visual Upgrade, 5 - Record Storage, and 6 - Offices Renovation).
- Proceed with a second Request for Proposals for Town Banking Services in Spring 2012.
- Continue to monitor competitiveness of salaries and consider during FY 2012-13 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, 2012, if economic conditions allow.
- Proceed with implementation of Environmental Conservation Plan, subject to cost evaluation and possible grant funding (Car Charging Station on Main Street and/or parking facilities).
- Follow-up on U.S. Post Office Recycling.
- Implement electronic Town Council packets and associated equipment to reduce paper/copier/staff expense in Spring 2012.
- Proceed with implementation of organization work order software to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- 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 to provide educational information to downtown property owners and review during Downtown Retail Strategy discussions.

- 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 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.
- Consider additional revenue sources to lessen burden on property tax (fees, assessments, tax district, street cost recovery fee, etc.).

Tourism Issues

- Schedule annual meeting with TDA to review Tourism Annual Report (March 2012).
- Continue with implementation of Blowing Rock Retail Strategy.
- Continue Master Signage Plan implementation (include Parks & Recreation facilities).
- Continue to support the proposed Middle Fork Greenway Project connecting Blowing Rock and Boone.
- Request TDA to explore placing Blowing Rock tourism information at App Ski Mountain to encourage commerce.

Planning Issues

- Proceed with the update of the Town Comprehensive Plan. Once survey is developed, share questions for Town Council review.
- Continue to maintain the current Town Comprehensive Plan.
- Survey citizens during Comprehensive Plan Update regarding Short-term Rental (28 day) Ordinance. (Holidays, Seasonal, Bi-monthly, and R-6M & R-10M zoning districts)
- Seek Town Attorney Opinion on legality of fee for rental enforcement.
- Proceed with next phase of Central Business/Town Center zoning discussion (heights, setbacks, uses, etc.), beginning with Central Business.
- Complete Town Land Use Code Review/Revision Project and CUP Tracking Database Software (include landscaping component, parking lot maintenance and site plans).
- Continue to implement recommendations of the Downtown Retail Strategy and monitor effectiveness.
- Continue to implement planning/inspections customer satisfaction surveys to both contractors and property owners.

- Continue to monitor impacts of U.S. 321 Widening Project (work with tourism partners).
- Consider the possibility of service roads in Conditional Use Permit applications to improve access on Valley Boulevard once widening is complete.
- Pursue improved cellular telephone coverage in the Blowing Rock area.
- Defer any action on windmills, but request Planning Board to study and develop regulations for small wind turbines for Town Council consideration (noise, appearance, safety and long-term maintenance).
- Draft ordinance amendment allowing golf carts on west side of US 321 for Town Council consideration.
- Monitor growth opportunities (Possum Hollow Road area, Green Hill Road/Parkway, Goforth Road and US 321) and future impact on Town services.
- Facilitate discussion regarding economic development opportunities for the Blowing Rock Hospital property and surrounding land once vacancy occurs.
- Consider annexation and water/sewer availability for Blowing Rock Conference Center property, subject to town standards. (Consider extending timeline for impact fees payments in exchange for land for possible town water tank, and seek Town Attorney Opinion on possibility of occupancy tax fees upon annexation.)

Public Safety Issues (Emergency Services/Police)

- Consider Watauga County proposal for dispatch consolidation and consider pursuing customer service staffing if consolidated.
- Continue to work on improving communication with citizens regarding police and fire services.
- Continue to encourage installation of house numbers throughout the Town, with community group involvement and consider reflective street signs with block numbers to improve visibility at night.

Emergency Services

- Develop a resolution for Council consideration requesting 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 via grant funding and donations.
- Consider locating fire truck downtown for display and children interaction.

Police

- Investigate and provide cost analysis for paid parking (kiosks) on Main Street for Council consideration.
- Consider equipment upgrades during FY 2012-13 budget process and pursue additional Mobile Data Terminals through available grant funding.
- Increase foot patrols in downtown areas (especially during the peak tourism season and high-traffic times of 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.) and visit all businesses.

Infrastructure Issues (Public Works/Water/Wastewater)

Public Works

- Paint turn-lane arrows on Main Street at Sunset Drive and US 221.
- Explore alternative options rather than salt for use on sidewalks. Allow merchants to acquire product.
- Place Town seal on all vehicles.
- Continue Street Pavement Plan implementation and coordinate paving with water/sewer utilities and ditch repair. Consider increased funding and a proposed timeline.
- Investigate cracks in recently paved streets and seal.
- Implement plan to improve existing ditches, considering the options of rip-rap, paving, piping or curb & gutter. Also, continue to paint white lines @ edge of pavement for safety.
- Continue to operate a residential curbside recycling program, track cost savings and inform public of program success.
- Continue to remove dead trees from Town properties and Town right of way.
- Investigate the possibility of expanding Woodlawn Cemetery.
- Investigate/explore used public works equipment.

Water/Sewer

- Complete land exchange with U.S. Park Service for Town Reservoir property, and obtain water/sewer easements to equalize values.
- Complete Water Plant appearance project (painting & plantings).

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) Complete acquisition of property for Public Works facility expansion with Triple Tree, LLC and BR Charity Horse Show.
 - 2) Proceed with Phase One of Public Works Facility Improvements – Salt Bin Storage, seek bids once property acquisition is complete.
 - 3) Proceed and seek bids for roof replacement of the American Legion Building and complete other recommended safety measures.
 - 4) Review alternatives for American Legion building and surrounding property for Council consideration.
 - 5) Review alternatives for Ice House building for Council consideration.
 - 6) 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:
 - Address inflow/infiltration sewer issues. (Cornish Road/Ransom Street area and Mayview Lift Station). Check BR School.
 - Fund US 321 NCDOT Water/Sewer Betterments and monitor construction.
 - Proceed with CIP Phase II (WWTP Misc. Improvements, Air Piping and Diffusers in Aeration Tanks, and Generator) with state loan funds. Bid in March 2012.

- Re-evaluate Town Reservoir underwater depth.
- Seek grant funding to aid in water/sewer extension to Blowing Rock Hospital area on US 321.
- Obtain easement for next phase of Laurel Park sewer extension, and proceed once funds are available.
- Proceed with Gideon Ridge water/sewer improvement plan once funds are available.
- Replace and upgrade deteriorating water and sewer lines, as funding allows.
- Proceed with Downtown Streetscape Plan Phase III – St. Mary’s to Storie Street area for possible construction in 2012. (No bulb-outs and consider night construction and NCDOT coordination to lessen impacts on merchants)
- Inquire if Wells Fargo will fund Streetscape in front of bank building similar to First Citizens Bank.
- Continue to pursue NCDOT Enhancement funding for Downtown Streetscape Plan.
- Add bicycle parking, motorcycle parking and bus parking in downtown area.
- 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.

Parks & Recreation/Town Beautification Issues

- Continue P&R Master Plan implementation.
- Continue to work with BRAAC on overall beautification of Town.
- Continue to improve overall Downtown Beautification & General Maintenance.
- Till and improve drainage for the perimeter track located at Davant Field.
- Check on dead tree across from Broyhill Park and remove.
- Investigate the possibility of seasonal ice rink for Memorial Park tennis courts.
- Review schedule of fees/charges for Robbins Pool for FY 2012-13.
- Complete pool picnic shelter and continue to seek donations.

Other

- Establish Town Council meeting times as follows: 5:00 p.m. – December, January, February, and March, and 5:30 p.m. – April, May, June, July, August, September, October and November.
- Continue to monitor the impacts of the following – Hayes Performing Arts Center, BRAHM, Chamber Wine/Culinary Project, BR Commons & Healthcare/Hospital Planning.
- Consolidate Town signage to reduce clutter.
- Conduct an audit of current sign ordinance compliance.
- Request Financial Statement from Blowing Rock Art & History Museum and other organizations receiving Town funds to insure financial strength.
- Share with Town Council the US 321 widening proposed fencing map.
- Determine ad valorem tax of future hospital project and ancillary uses.

At the conclusion of the Retreat, Mayor Lawrence excused Finance Director Norman and Town Clerk Greene from the meeting.

At this time, a performance review with Town Manager Hildebran was completed and future goals and objectives were discussed.

ADJOURN

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk