

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting-April 10, 2012

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, April 10, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Dan Phillips, Tommy Klutz, Doug Matheson and Jim Steele. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer R.J. Moseley, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Police Lieutenant Justin Wood, Finance Director Nicole Norman, Public Works Director Mike Wilcox, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Jason Balcom and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Phillips to approve the minutes as written for meetings held on March 12th, 13th, and 19th, 2012, seconded by Commissioner Klutz. Unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Consolidated Communication Center

Town Manager Hildebran presented a proposal to Council from Watauga County regarding consolidation of the public safety telecommunication centers within the County. Mr. Hildebran stated the proposal outlined a mechanism for consolidating Town of Blowing Rock law enforcement dispatch services with Watauga County, including oversight and administration, and the allocation of the costs for such consolidation.

Council also received a summary of the current dispatch operations and Resolution #2012-03 stating the Town's desire to consider consolidation which was approved during the January 10, 2012 meeting.

Mr. Hildebran stated that Watauga County Commissioner Vince Gable was present to answer questions regarding this issue. Mr. Gable mentioned this item had been discussed as far back as 1987. He advised that Watauga County was prepared to move forward with the consolidation and if Blowing Rock chose to join, the effective date would be July 1, 2012.

Mr. Hildebran reviewed several items included in the draft Inter Local Governmental Agreement pertaining to the consolidated dispatch; such as staffing/personnel issues as well as cost savings to the Town. He then reviewed the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and stated the Town would pay Watauga County \$179,701 for the dispatch services during the initial year. In addition, the County would establish a 9-1-1 Advisory Committee with representation from the Town to provide input and recommendations regarding the combined dispatch program.

Commissioner Phillips questioned if other municipalities such as Beech Mountain, Seven Devils, or Banner Elk would be consolidating with Watauga County and paying a fee as well. Town Manager Hildebran explained that the majority of Beech Mountain was located in Avery County, not Watauga County and they were a primary dispatch center, therefore; they would not be consolidating with Watauga. Also, Seven Devils was primarily serviced by Avery County.

Commissioner Phillips then inquired if other municipalities around the State paid a fee. Mr. Hildebran responded that certain areas paid while others did not. He mentioned that some coastal towns did not pay a fee.

Mr. Hildebran also mentioned that Beech Mountain served as a back-up system for Watauga County in case of a catastrophic event since Beech Mountain was serviced by different telephone and electrical services than Watauga County.

Commissioner Phillips had questions regarding funding for the consolidation. He commented that it looked as if Watauga County would be paying a cost similar to what Blowing Rock would be paying, possibly less, if they agreed to join the consolidation.

Mr. Gable explained that Watauga County received 911 funding from the State each year whether Blowing Rock and Boone decided to join the consolidation or not. He stated that Watauga County would not see a windfall of savings and there was a slight potential of losing money. He also mentioned there was a narrow window of areas that 911 funds from the State could be used for. Mr. Gable stated that he believed Blowing Rock would be saving approximately \$63,000 or more a year if they joined the consolidation.

Commissioner Steele questioned the percentage split for the consolidation budget and how the percentage was determined. Mr. Hildebran explained the percentage was based on the call volume of each entity over the past four years.

Commissioner Steele asked how the merger would benefit the citizens of Blowing Rock. Mr. Gable explained the citizens would be receiving better overall service because there would be more than one dispatcher on duty at all times. Emergency Services Director Kent Graham commented the overall efficiency as well as the safety of the citizens would be better. Commissioner Steele inquired if Police Chief Brown was for or against the consolidation. Lt. Wood advised that Chief Brown was in favor of the consolidation.

Commissioner Steele then asked if the consolidation would be paid for with real estate taxes. Mr. Hildebran explained that yes, it would be paid for with the same funds as it had always been paid.

Mr. Hildebran voiced his concern with only one dispatcher being on duty and more than one emergency happening; and in a life and death situation it was critical that the dispatcher remain with one call at a time. Also, Mr. Hildebran discussed the probability of the State mandating that two dispatchers be on duty at all times and the costs that would be incurred should this happen. Mr. Gable expressed that it was his belief a mandate could happen as soon as the year 2013.

Commissioner Steele asked why Blowing Rock should move forward with the consolidation now versus waiting until the mandate happened. Mr. Gable stated with the unstable economy and the uncertainty of the affect of the tax revaluation, the County had spent lots of time and money to move forward with the consolidation.

Mayor Lawrence interjected that according to the proposal, the Town would save at least \$54,500 in the next budget year and the citizens would be receiving better services.

Town resident Ginny Stevens asked how the Caldwell County residents of Blowing Rock would be affected. EMS Director Kent Graham stated that all calls from the Caldwell County areas of Blowing Rock were going to Caldwell County currently and there would be no change in services. Mr. Gable also mentioned that Caldwell County was a consolidated operation.

Mr. Graham continued by informing Council the State 911 Board made the decisions regarding 911 funding and if Blowing Rock waited until this issue was mandated, they may not be agreeable with the decisions made by the State 911 Board.

Mr. Gable also advised that the County would be adding another console that would have a dedicated dispatcher and that each entity would be aware of any emergency events happening at all times.

Commissioner Steele inquired if the police cars were equipped with computers currently. Lieutenant Wood responded that five out of the ten police cars had computers at this time, but the Police Department had applied for grant funding to equip the remaining cars with computers.

After further conversation regarding 911 funds, Commissioner Klutz commented he did not think there would be a huge savings and the Town might actually lose money. He continued to state that an administrative assistant would be needed at the Police Department to answer calls and assist walk-ins and this would be an additional cost to the Town.

Commissioner Steele mentioned that there wasn't an administrative assistant at the Police Department now; the dispatcher on duty assisted the public.

Commissioner Klutz then mentioned that an administrative assistant would be needed 24/7 to assist the public with their needs. Mayor Lawrence remarked the Police Department was for emergency situations only.

Commissioner Phillips again voiced his concerns with the percentage split that Blowing Rock would be paying to the County. He expressed that Blowing Rock's percentage would be 26% and would decrease should Boone decide to join the consolidation. He commented that he did not think that Blowing Rock should be funding the Town of Boone.

Blowing Rock resident Karyn Herterich asked about the level of service that residents of Blowing Rock would receive with the consolidation. She felt the County dispatchers would not be familiar with the area or the needs of the citizens. Mayor Lawrence stated the County was handling all the fire and rescue calls currently and with the consolidation, police calls would be added.

Mr. Gable reiterated if Boone decided to wait until the mandate, the costs for the County to reconfigure again would have to be paid by Boone at that time.

Commissioner Phillips inquired about the purpose of the proposed Advisory Board. Mr. Gable explained the Board would help with any potential problems and needs that might arise with the consolidation.

Blowing Rock resident Regina Pelsmaeker asked for clarification regarding the percentage split and how it was calculated. Town Manager Hildebran again explained the 74/26 split was based on the average number of calls for the past 4 years for Watauga County and Blowing Rock.

Commissioner Yount commented that during the discussion he had heard Mr. Gable say that Boone would pay a premium should they decide to join later. He wanted to know if Blowing Rock would also have one if they decided to join at a later date. Mayor Lawrence interjected that with the 3 year waiver of the CPI, it would save the Town anywhere from \$18,000 to \$25,000 and he thought this was an incentive for Blowing Rock to join the consolidation now.

Mr. Gable explained if Boone decided to wait and join later, the County would have to reconfigure the dispatch center in order to handle the volume of calls and employees who would be coming from Boone, and if that happened Boone would be required to pay the reconfiguration costs.

Commissioner Klutz remarked that it would be less cost for everyone if Blowing Rock and Boone joined at the same time. Mr. Gable stated that it would be unsafe for both entities to join at the same time due to the increase in call volume and potential

confusion; that was why it was proposed that Blowing Rock join as of July 1, 2012, and Boone would possibly join later.

Commissioner Steele mentioned that he felt that Blowing Rock shouldn't have to pay an extra 10 percent just because Boone had not decided to join the consolidation at this time. He felt that Blowing Rock should receive a credit for the extra costs incurred when and if Boone joined.

Mayor Lawrence stated that Blowing Rock could not worry about what other entities were doing; Blowing Rock needed to take advantage of the money saved with the waiver of the CPI in addition to better services for the citizens.

Commissioner Phillips commented that he did not see the consolidation as being fair or good for Blowing Rock. Mayor Lawrence responded that it had been demonstrated there would be a cost savings and better services as well as Police Chief Brown and EMS Director Graham were in favor of the consolidation.

Commissioner Steele remarked the Town could opt out of the contract after a year if they saw that it was not feasible.

Commissioner Yount stated "if you need the service, you need the service" and that he knew the technology was better, but his heart and his head did not agree. He thought the Town wasn't quite ready to join the consolidation.

Mayor Lawrence called for a motion at this time. Commissioner Klutz made the motion to deny the request and for Blowing Rock to continue to serve their citizens. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips.

Commissioner Steele voiced that he thought it would be best to consider waiting, but he was not in favor of being in the 911 business. Town Manager Hildebran clarified that Blowing Rock did not answer 9-1-1 calls, only police calls.

Commissioner Steele asked Commissioner Matheson to voice his opinion on the matter. Commissioner Matheson advised that Chief Brown thought it would be best for his department as well as the citizens of Blowing Rock to consolidate and he was inclined to agree with him.

Commissioner Steele mentioned it was an opportunity to save the taxpayers some money as well as enhance their services. He also mentioned that both Chief Brown and EMS Director Graham were in favor and the Town could opt out of the contract after a year. He asked Council what would be the harm to go along with the consolidation.

Commissioner Phillips stated it would be difficult to rehire and open that area of the Police Department back up and there was no guarantee the services would be better or money would be saved.

Mayor Lawrence asked for the members of Council to vote on Commissioner Klutz's motion to deny the request. In favor: Klutz, Phillips, and Steele. Against: Matheson and Yount. Motion carried 3-2. Motion denied.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Wastewater Treatment Plant CIP Phase II – Bid Award (Res #2012-10) and Loan Acceptance (Res. #2012-11)

Town Manager Hildebran advised that the Town had received bids for Wastewater Treatment Plant improvements (CIP Phase II) on March 27, 2012.

The project consisted of improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Plant such as a new generator to replace the existing generator, new air piping and diffusers for the aeration basins, handrail repairs, and related appurtenances. Mr. Hildebran advised that the items proposed were included in the Water & Sewer Capital Improvement Plan.

The bids were as follows:

Greene Construction Inc. (Boone, NC)	\$408,998
Brushy Mountain Builders, Inc. (Lenoir, NC)	\$499,000
Gilbert Engineering Co. (Statesville, NC)	\$515,000
Hickory Construction Co. (Hickory, NC)	\$584,700
Mack Industries, Inc. (Astatula, FL)	\$694,700

Mr. Hildebran advised that due to not yet having received the Minority Enterprise/Women Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) documents required by the State, this item would need to be deferred until the next meeting.

Mr. Hildebran then stated that the project has received approval for loan assistance from the NC Clean Water State Revolving Fund in the amount of \$737,000. These funds are made available to units of local government at one half of the market rate for the period of up to twenty (20) years and the current interest rate stands at 2.455%.

Due to time constraints, Town Manager Hildebran requested that Council proceed with the loan acceptance and Council would need to adopt Resolution #2012-11 and formally authorize the Mayor to execute all required documents.

Commissioner Phillips questioned if approved, would this item increase the Town's total debt. Mr. Hildebran explained that the project had been programmed into the Town's budget two (2) years prior and the debt level would remain flat due to the retirement of sewer bonds.

Mayor Lawrence called for a motion. Commissioner Steele made a motion to adopt Resolution #2012-11 for loan financing at this time and defer the bid award until the

required documentation was received. Commissioner Klutz seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. **Loan Acceptance Res #2012-11 – Exhibit A**

2. Mayview Madness - 5K Road Race/Fun Run (September 22, 2012)

Town Manager Hildebran presented a request from the Blue Ridge Conservancy to hold their 13th Annual Blowing Rock Mayview Madness 5K Run/Fun Run on Saturday, September 22, 2012. According to Mr. Hildebran, the Fun Run event would begin at 8:00 a.m. on Park Avenue then loop around Memorial Park on Main Street and return to finish at the rear of the Park. The Annual 5K event would begin at 8:30 a.m. at the rear of Memorial Park, continue up to the Mayview area and end at the Bistro Roca.

Mr. Hildebran stated that Blue Ridge Conservancy would coordinate activities with the Parks & Recreation Department, Blowing Rock Fire & Rescue as well as the Police Department.

With no further comments, Commissioner Matheson made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Commissioner Klutz. Unanimously approved.

3. NCDOT Permanent Utility Easement – Fire-Rescue Building

Town Manager Hildebran presented a right-of-way claim report and offer to purchase from NCDOT for a permanent utility easement at the Blowing Rock Fire and Rescue building. The easement would be needed to supply power from the proposed underground electric service along the Hwy. 321 right-of-way to the transformer that services the building. Mr. Hildebran advised the offer from NCDOT was \$8,775.00.

Commissioner Klutz made a motion to accept the Right-of-Way Claim Report and Offer to Purchase from NCDOT as presented. Commissioner Phillips seconded the motion. **Right-of-Way Claim Report and Offer to Purchase Permanent Utility Easement – Exhibit B & C**

4. Taylor Boundary Agreement – Plat/Easement

A boundary line agreement between the Town and Garvey and Carolyn Taylor was presented to Council for their consideration. Mr. Hildebran explained that the Taylor's surveyor had found some discrepancies with a common boundary line with the Town's property located at Glen Marie Falls. If approved by Council, the line adjustment would resolve the location of the common boundary line and provide additional acreage to the Town's property through the clarification.

Mr. Hildebran stated that Town Attorney Moseley had reviewed the proposed boundary line agreement and recommended its execution. A motion was made by Commissioner Phillips, seconded by Commissioner Klutz to accept the Boundary Line Agreement as presented. **Taylor Boundary Line Agreement – Exhibit D**

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Town Manager Hildebran advised that the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission (BRAAC) had agreed to act as a liaison between the Town and NCDOT regarding materials to be used for fencing, walls, etc. during the Hwy 321 Widening Project. Council accepted this offer.

Several fencing options were discussed. A suggestion was made for staff to look into ivy fencing as another option to consider.

Council also discussed materials for retaining walls for the project.

Town Manager Hildebran reminded everyone of the upcoming Wine Festival as well as the Town Clean-Up Day on Saturday, April 21, 2012 beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Commissioner Steele advised that during a previous meeting, he had been asked by other Council members to review the idea of the Police Department relocating to the Fire Department building on Valley Boulevard. Commissioner Steele stated that he was to look at the facility and make a decision as to whether it would be feasible to consolidate the two departments into the one area. He stated after walking through the fire department building he had come to the conclusion there would not be adequate space to meet both department's needs.

Commissioner Klutz thanked Commissioner Steele for taking the time to review the issue further.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk

ATTACHEMENTS (April 10, 2012)

Loan Acceptance Res #2012-11 – Exhibit A

Right of Way Claim Report and Offer to Purchase Permanent Utility Easement – Exhibit B & C

Taylor Boundary Line Agreement – Exhibit D