

**MINUTES**  
**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**Special Meeting-Tuesday, April 17, 2012**

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Tuesday, April 17, 2012 beginning at 3:30 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, EMS Director Kent Graham, Police Chief Eric Brown, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. and stated that he had received a request from a Council Member Steele to revisit the Consolidated Dispatch Proposal that had been previously discussed during the regular meeting held on May 10, 2012. As such, Mayor Lawrence called the special meeting. During the regular meeting, the Consolidated Dispatch request had been denied with a 3-2 vote from Council.

**CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH**

Mr. Hildebran stated that Commissioner Steele had contacted him regarding some concerns and further questions that he had in reference to the consolidation issue. Mr. Hildebran stated at the request of Commissioner Steele, he had spoken with County Manager Deron Geouque regarding this matter. After dialog with Watauga County, Mr. Hildebran advised that Watauga County had agreed to decrease Blowing Rock's overall cost from \$179,701 to \$165,016 for a reduction of \$14,685; however, the County eliminated the CPI 3-year waiver for 5 years. The budget decrease was due to the omission of Blowing Rock's portion of the Director's salary that was included in the original proposal.

Mr. Hildebran stated the Town would be saving approximately \$109,603 over a 5-year period and up to \$25,000 per year thereafter. Also, there would most likely need to be an administrative assistant at the Police Department Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to assist the public.

Mr. Hildebran then addressed the 9-1-1 Advisory Committee to be formed. He said the committee would consist of six (6) members representing Blowing Rock, Watauga County, Fire, Police, Rescue and Boone should they decide to join the consolidation. If Boone decided against joining, there would only be five (5) members. Also, the new EMS Director position would serve as an ex-officio member.

Mr. Hildebran mentioned if the State mandated that there be two dispatchers on duty 24/7, and Blowing Rock was not a part of the consolidation, there would be an increase in costs to the Town of approximately \$180,000 per year which could possibly mean an increase of two cents on the tax rate.

Commissioner Phillips asked if there was anything in writing about what would happen if Blowing Rock chose to opt out after the 12 month period in reference to equipment, employees, etc. Mr. Hildebran stated if the Town chose to opt out of the agreement, they would not be taking any equipment nor would they be taking employees. The Town would be starting over.

Commissioner Phillips also had questions regarding 9-1-1 funds that the County receives from the State and if these funds were separate from the County's General Fund. Mr. Geouque responded that 9-1-1 funds had to be placed in a separate fund to be used for 9-1-1 purposes only. According to Mr. Geouque, 9-1-1 funds could not be used elsewhere.

Commissioner Klutz asked Mr. Geouque if he knew why Blowing Rock had lost their Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) funding from the State. Mr. Geouque stated he did not know the answer to that question because the State mandated how these funds were to be distributed and used. Mr. Geouque stated it was his opinion that the 9-1-1 funds should be used for everything pertaining to 9-1-1 services.

Commissioner Klutz then asked Mr. Geouque if he could say that funding for Blowing Rock from the County would not be taken away if Blowing Rock decided against joining the consolidation. Commissioner Klutz stated that he felt the potential loss of funds was being used as a "scare tactic" to intimidate the Town into joining the consolidation. Mr. Geouque stated this was not his decision to make, the County Commissioners decided how and where County funds were dispersed and used.

Commissioner Klutz also questioned the number of staff that Watauga County would have with the consolidation. Mr. Geouque stated that the County would be hiring two additional dispatchers that would be transferring from Blowing Rock in addition to the number of dispatchers existing at the County currently.

Town resident, Regina Pelsmaeker remarked that she was upset with how the special meeting was called. She felt that adequate notice was not given and the time chosen was not good for people who worked.

She also stated, that she was not "on board" with the savings that she kept hearing about. Ms. Pelsmaeker asked everyone to view a large photo of her father Chief Bill Greene who had lost his life in the line of duty. Ms Pelsmaeker explained that during that time, Blowing Rock did not have a dispatcher; everything was dispatched through the County and the County had not received the call, the Town of Salisbury had answered instead. Afterwards, Blowing Rock had begun the dispatch program and it had worked fine throughout the years. She also stated "if the system wasn't broken, why

fix it?” Ms. Pelsmaecker commented, that in her opinion, Blowing Rock was being “bullied” into joining the consolidated dispatch program. Ms. Pelsmaecker continued to state that Council had been elected to listen to the citizens of Blowing Rock.

Commissioner Steele responded that during the regular meeting, he had unanswered questions and concerns regarding the consolidation and felt it was presented as a “take it or leave it” proposal and at that time he voted to leave it. He stated the County had agreed to review the Town’s concerns once again and had returned with another proposal. Commissioner Steele extended his gratitude to Watauga County for listening.

Commissioner Steele then stated that he had asked for this meeting and as a Councilman he had every right to do so. Commissioner Steele stated that he wanted to hear what the County was offering and based on what he was seeing, they had listened to Blowing Rock and were trying to work with the Town. He also mentioned the cost of \$165,000 vs. \$234,000 if the Town decided not to consolidate and that in the current economic times, local governments did not have money to waste.

Commissioner Steele also mentioned that he had spoken with Police Chief Eric Brown since the last meeting and the Chief stated he thought the citizens of Blowing Rock would receive better service if consolidation occurred. Commissioner Steele further stated that he had also spoken with EMS Director Kent Graham and he too was in favor of the consolidation.

Commissioner Steele remarked that the Town would be receiving better services as well as saving money. He once again thanked Watauga County for listening to the Town. He continuing by stating that the citizens of Blowing Rock had elected members of Council to listen and do what they felt best for the Town and its citizens.

Commissioner Steele then made a motion to adopt the latest proposal from Watauga County regarding the Consolidated Dispatch. The motion received a second from Commissioner Matheson.

Commissioner Phillips interjected that he would like to make a substitute motion for a referendum to be held in November 2012 allowing the citizens to decide if they wanted to fund equipment upgrades, and hire employees, etc. letting them know what the costs would be and the affect it would have on their tax dollars. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Klutz.

Commissioner Yount inquired if another motion was allowed since a motion had been made already. Town Attorney Moseley stated that once a motion was on the floor and had been seconded, it had to be voted upon.

Town Manager Scott Hildebran also remarked that according to the North Carolina law a referendum would not be allowed in this case.

Commissioner Phillips advised that he had spoken with several people regarding the “Roberts Rules of Order” and a substitute motion should be allowed. Town Attorney Moseley stated the original motion needed to be voted on before another motion could be allowed.

Commissioner Klutz questioned if the administrative assistant salary was included in the \$165,016.00 total cost. After some discussion, Commissioner Steele stated he thought this should be a separate issue, because a definite figure had not been agreed upon for the administrative assistant position.

Commissioner Phillips commented that after thinking about everything following the regular meeting; he had made a mistake by worrying about what Boone was or was not going to pay. He stated there were several issues in the newspaper that alluded to Blowing Rock wanting something for nothing, that they were on a power-play, that Blowing Rock had their own agenda, and the prospects would be less desirable later, as well as the deal being off the table for good. Commissioner Phillips responded to these comments by stating that he didn't feel that an amount of money exceeding \$100,000 was nothing; a better word for power-play would be willingness to negotiate; and Blowing Rock did have their own agenda, they were trying to do what is best for their citizens. Commissioner Phillips continued to state that he had a real problem with Blowing Rock being threatened with anything.

Commissioner Phillips continued to state if the citizens of Blowing Rock wanted to stand behind the costs to upgrade the dispatch center, hire employees, etc. they would be able to accomplish this as well as anyone. He remarked that the citizens of Blowing Rock should be allowed to vote on this issue. Commissioner Klutz concurred with Commissioner Phillips.

Commissioner Steele stated that Commissioner Phillips had made a valid statement and if at any time Mr. Phillips could get the citizens to stand behind that kind of money he would discuss it, but he was concerned with the present time and Blowing Rock could not make their decision based on what Boone decided.

Commissioner Yount asked the Clerk to restate Commissioner Steele's motion at this time. Mayor Lawrence asked for a vote on the motion. In favor of Commissioner Steele's motion to adopt the Consolidated Dispatch Proposal from Watauga County were: Steele, Matheson, and Yount. Against: Phillips and Klutz. Motion carried 3-2.  
**Interlocal Governmental Agreement Regarding Consolidation of 9-1-1 Dispatch Services for Watauga County and the Town of Blowing Rock - Exhibit A**

Commissioner Phillips then asked that his motion be considered. He requested that Town Manager Hildebran read the NC General Statute that said a referendum could not be held. Town Manager Hildebran responded that the UNC School of Government had recently discussed referendums and under NC law; only those elections specifically authorized by the State's Constitution or by State Statute may be held and this issue

wasn't one of them. Commissioner Phillips directed Town Attorney Moseley to research this matter further.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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

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

**ATTACHEMENT (04-17-12)**

Interlocal Governmental Agreement Regarding Consolidation of 9-1-1 Dispatch Services for Watauga County and the Town of Blowing Rock - Exhibit A