

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Board of Commissioners
Special Work Session-October 1, 2012

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special work session on Monday, October 1, 2012. The work session took place at the American Legion building located at 333 Wallingford Street. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Tommy Klutz, Jim Steele, and Dan Phillips. Unable to attend was Commissioner Doug Matheson. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Town Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works Director Mike Wilcox and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the work session to order at 5:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

DISCUSSION ITEM

1. American Legion

Town Manager Hildebran began the discussion by stating the Town had received a NC PARTF grant in August in the amount of \$142,500 intended for improvements to the American Legion building. Such improvements would allow for use of the facility as community/recreation center space. He also stated a decision needed to be made by mid October whether to accept the funds. He advised once the grant money had been accepted, the Town would have three years to complete the project.

Commissioner Steele asked about the scheduled use of the building, and what would happen if the Town accepted the money and work began, to the groups/events already scheduled. Mr. Hildebran advised the Town would find other accommodations for the events should the American Legion be unavailable during renovation.

Also, the Town must provide a match to the \$142,500 in funds. The match would come from the existing capital reserve funds and from community contributions. Mr. Hildebran stated the Town had recently replaced the roof and gutters on the building, prior to receiving the grant. He advised the Town had \$116,800 set aside for the American Legion project with three years to obtain the balance.

McGill Associates (with CBSA Architects) developed three alternatives for consideration: 1) renovation to the current structure with the PARTF grant, 2) renovation of the current structure with the PARTF grant with a future addition of covered outdoor space, 3) a total tear down and rebuild maximizing buildable space. Mr. Hildebran mentioned a fourth option for a timber frame structure designed by Hardin Creek Timber Frame.

Town Engineer Doug Chapman stated the building had been inspected and no significant problems were detected. However, there were several smaller structural repairs needed.

Commissioner Phillips asked if the building had been inspected for asbestos. He also stated that he had concerns regarding moisture in the building and how it would affect the occupants. Town Engineer stated they had not checked for asbestos, but would follow up on the matter.

Mr. Chapman then went into more detail regarding the renovation options with Council.

Commissioner Steele commented the American Legion site was a beautiful location overlooking the lake but maybe the Town should wait until the demand was there to spend a large amount of money on the building.

Commissioner Klutz expressed that he thought an open air post/beam structure would be best for the location. Commissioner Klutz commented that he felt the citizens of Blowing Rock would be in favor of raising the funds to build a building such as this.

Ms. Ginny Stevens responded that she did not see the logic behind that type of building given the weather that Blowing Rock has at times and felt that an open air structure would not be feasible. Ms. Stevens also commented that the American Legion Building had been built by a small group of people as a memorial for war veterans.

Commissioner Phillips advised that he would like to see all avenues evaluated on what was best for the American Legion Building. He also expressed that he valued the history of the building as well, but he felt it was only fair to look at other options and have a building that would generate revenue for the Town. He further explained that he was not prepared to make a decision until he had more information.

Ms. Stevens responded the building was currently being used by many different groups and she felt the demand was present to move forward with renovations to the building.

Mr. Ron Oberle stated he had been involved with the American Legion since 1992 and through the years the building had been used by many. He expressed that he did not want the Town to get carried away and build something that would not be utilized.

Commissioner Steele stated the objective of the work session was to discuss the options available and a final decision would not be made in haste.

Chamber Director Charles Hardin mentioned that he had witnessed moisture problems in one corner of the building. He also stated that a group of people had made a trip to Raleigh to look at the Angus Barn Pavillion and he felt there was a need for a more collective space with more flexibility. He stated there were many weddings held in Blowing Rock and a place to hold wedding receptions was needed in the area.

Mayor Lawrence asked Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown approximately how many weddings she scheduled at various town property locations. Ms. Brown stated that on an average, there were at least 2 to 3 per month, possibly more.

Mr. Hardin also stated the Chamber had many events throughout the year such as the Farmer's Market, Fire on the Rock, Art in the Park, etc. He stated that due to the location of Art in the Park and the potential for wet weather there were many high-end vendors who did not participate due to the fear of moisture damage to their artwork. He stated it would be beneficial to be able to offer inside sites to those people.

Mr. Hildebran also stated there were certain elements that had to be fulfilled to receive grant funding and Blowing Rock was one of six who had been approved. He felt if the Town turned the money down it would be difficult to receive funding in the future.

Commissioner Phillips expressed that he didn't think it would be difficult to apply and receive grant funding later should the Town decide to decline the \$142,500 in grant money now.

Audience member Mr. Lloyd Smith stated with the Town being one of six grants accepted in North Carolina, he didn't think the money should be declined. Mr. Oberle was in agreement with Mr. Smith.

After further discussion, it was the consensus of Council to continue the debate regarding the acceptance of \$142,500 in grant funding during their next regular meeting held on October 9th. At that time, Council would also review the salt bin structure planned for the public works location on Cone Road.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the work session was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

MAYOR _____ **ATTEST** _____
J.B. Lawrence **Sharon Greene, Town Clerk**