

**DRAFT**  
**MINUTES**  
**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**Regular Meeting- January 14, 2014**

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, January 14, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Albert Yount, Dan Phillips, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson and Ray Pickett. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Building Inspector John Warren, Police Captain Aaron Miller, Finance Director Nicole Norman, Public Works Director Mike Wilcox, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Sweeting to approve the minutes for the December 10<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 meetings as written, seconded by Commissioner Pickett. Unanimously approved.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING COUNCIL MEMBER**

Mayor Lawrence called upon former Council Member Tommy Klutz in order to present him with a plaque for his eight years of service on Town Council. Mayor Lawrence wished Mr. Klutz all the best and thanked him for his great service to the citizens of Blowing Rock.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF THOMAS G. McRARY**

Mayor Lawrence stated the Town of Blowing Rock had suffered the loss of Tom McRary, a valuable and beloved employee on December 11, 2013. Mr. McRary had been an employee of the Town for 34 years serving as the Water/Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor. Mayor Lawrence asked that Tom's wife, Debbie McRary, and his mother Connie McRary, and several other family members come forward to accept a "Resolution Authorizing the Dedication and Naming of the Blowing Rock Water Treatment Plant in Honor of Thomas G. McRary." Mayor Lawrence stated that Tom had been a friend to everyone and had served the Town in an exemplary manner and the Town wished to honor him by dedicating and naming the Blowing Rock Water Treatment Plant as the "Thomas G. McRary Water Plant".

Ms. McRary thanked everyone for this special recognition.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Consideration of Tax Refunds and Releases**

Town Manager Fogleman stated that various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for refunds and releases and one had been recently identified and staff recommended Council's approval. Tax Release Request No. 2013-06 in the amount of \$815.92 to 179 Woodbine Way, LLC was presented to Council for their approval.

Commissioner Matheson made a motion to approve Tax Release Request No. 2013-06 as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pickett. Unanimously approved. **Tax Release Request No. 2013-06 – Exhibit A**

### **2. Ensemble Stage Request to Consider Former Blowing Rock Fire Station Building as Future Home**

Town Manager Fogleman advised during the December 10, 2013 Council meeting, Council had agreed to have staff begin working with Ensemble Stage to evaluate the feasibility of using the former Blowing Rock Fire Station located on Park Avenue as its future home. Ensemble Stage had submitted a letter outlining its proposed approach which included their raising all funding for capital improvements and being responsible for bringing design plans back to Council for approval prior to moving forward with consideration. Mr. Fogleman stated that Mr. Gary Smith, Artistic Director for Ensemble Stage was present to answer any questions or concerns that Council might have.

Commissioner Matheson inquired if Mr. Smith had an approximate dollar amount for the improvements to the building. Mr. Smith stated at this time he did not because the proposed plans had not been completed.

Commissioner Sweeting asked what the old Fire Station building was currently being used for. Town Manager Fogleman responded that the building was being used for storage.

Commissioner Phillips asked if Mr. Smith thought the funds could be raised and the improvements made in the timeframe stated in his request of 18 months. Mr. Smith commented that he hoped to have everything completed before the 18 month time period and be open for operation in 2014.

Commissioner Sweeting asked for a list of the Board of Directors for the Ensemble Stage. Mr. Smith stated their by-laws allowed for a 12-member board and currently they had nine (9) members. He then proceeded to list the board members.

Commissioner Matheson asked if Council would receive yearly updates from Ensemble Stage. Mr. Smith stated that he hoped to give monthly or quarterly updates to Council whichever they preferred.

Commissioner Yount asked why Ensemble Stage wanted to move from the Blowing Rock School Auditorium. Mr. Smith stated there were scheduling conflicts and also repairs were needed to the auditorium. Mr. Smith also advised if Ensemble Stage relocated to the old fire station building, they could become a year-round theatre which would favorably impact the town's economy.

Commissioner Phillips stated he wasn't against Ensemble Stage, but he would like to further discuss this matter at the Council Retreat. He also mentioned that he had concerns with the building being put "on hold" for 18 months.

Mayor Lawrence advised the building had been empty for approximately 4 years and was being used as storage space.

Mr. Smith commented that even though they had received offers from other communities, Ensemble Stage wished to remain in the Blowing Rock community if possible.

Commissioner Sweeting made a motion to table this item until further discussion could be held during the Council Retreat, January 19-21, 2014. She further stated she would like a financial statement and a list of the Board of Directors. Commissioner Phillips seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

### **3. Consideration of Bid Award for the American Legion Building Improvement Project**

Town Manager Fogleman stated bids had been received for the American Legion Building improvement project; however, the bids were in excess of the appropriated funding for the project. He stated the low bid was from Mastercraft in the amount of \$525,450 however, several bid alternative options/additions were given to reduce the total cost.

Mr. Fogleman stated in addition to the funds previously allocated for the project (\$339,900) there was a need for approximately \$211,822 of additional funding. Mr. Fogleman advised that Town Engineer Doug Chapman and David Patrick Moses were present to answer questions from Council.

After several questions/comments regarding the alternative options for the project, Commissioner Sweeting stated she wanted this project to be something everyone could be proud of and urged Council members to think "outside the box".

Town Manager Fogleman reviewed the General Fund debt service schedule as well as an adjusted debt service schedule showing the impact of the addition of debt service for the full balance of the project assuming a five year term and a current projected interest rate of 2%.

Commissioner Phillips expressed that improving infrastructure in town was a more pressing need.

Commissioner Sweeting suggested a challenge be put before Town residents/taxpayers to raise money for the American Legion project. She felt the Historical Society would be best at spearheading a fund raising effort with the Town matching the amount raised.

Town Manager Fogleman further explained the appropriated funds for the project and the need for an additional \$120,000 to meet the base bid amount.

Commissioner Yount asked why the bids received were higher than what was anticipated. Mr. Chapman explained changes were made to the plans regarding more windows being added on the back wall of the building overlooking Mayview Lake, bathroom renovations, heat and air conditioning, etc.

Commissioner Yount stated he would like to hear from constituents about the project. Audience member Karyn Herterich voiced her concerns with the level of commitment and the amount of funds that would be raised in order to complete the project. She didn't want there to be a half-finished building. Commissioner Sweeting agreed with Ms. Herterich and reiterated that she felt the residents of Blowing Rock would give donations towards this project.

Ginny Stevens, a member of the Historical Society stated she would mention this idea to the other members of the society and get back with the Town when she knew if they would be willing to spearhead the fund raising efforts.

Commissioner Sweeting then made a motion to accept the base bid from Mastercraft with financing of \$120,000 and further recommended that the Historical Society be approached regarding fund raising efforts and to enlist help from the Boy Scouts regarding fund raising efforts. Commissioner Sweeting also felt an honor wall at the American Legion building would be nice. Commissioner Yount seconded the motion for the purpose of discussion.

Town Manager Fogleman explained the Town had a 60-day window in which to accept the bid and during the Council meeting in February, a plan could be presented and an answer be received from the Historical Society regarding fund raising.

Commissioner Yount asked what would be obtained in the base bid. Mr. Moses explained what the base bid included. Commissioner Yount asked Mr. Moses for his opinion regarding the finished project. Mr. Moses stated he thought the building would look very nice.

Commissioner Sweeting asked Commissioner Yount if he would agree to rescind her earlier motion so this item could be discussed in further detail during their upcoming retreat. Commissioner Yount agreed. Motion rescinded.

Commissioner Sweeting then made another motion for the Historical Society to lead the fundraising efforts for the project, seconded by Commissioner Phillips. Unanimously approved.

**SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR**

Town resident and Chamber member John Aldridge spoke in favor of the Ensemble Stage. He stated that the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce had worked closely with Mr. Smith of the Ensemble Stage and while listening to the presentation earlier in the meeting, there had been a misunderstanding. He stated the old Fire Station building was currently being used as storage and Ensemble Stage was asking for the chance to put a deal together in order to possibly relocate the Ensemble Stage to that building. He didn't feel they were asking to begin a lease agreement with the Town at this stage only for permission to begin negotiations regarding the future use of the building. He further stated that other towns comparable to Blowing Rock had theatres and urged the Town to reach out to Ensemble Stage in a positive manner and give them the chance to continue producing good programs at a better location.

Commissioner Sweeting then made a motion to move into Closed Session pursuant to N.C. General Statutes 143-318.11(A.4), seconded by Commissioner Pickett. Unanimously approved. A brief break was taken at 6:10 p.m. before entering into Closed Session.

**ADJOURN**

At 8:10 p.m., Council reentered their regular meeting and with no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

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

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

**ATTACHMENTS** (01-14-14)  
Tax Release Request No. 2013-06 – Exhibit A