

**Town of Blowing Rock
Special Departmental Work Session
Monday, March 23, 2015**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council held an annual Departmental Work Session on Monday, March 23, 2015. The work session took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock N.C. Present were Mayor Pro-Tem Albert Yount, Council Members Doug Matheson, Sue Sweeting, and Ray Pickett. Mayor J.B. Lawrence and Council Member Dan Phillips were out of Town and unable to attend. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Finance Director Nicole Norman, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATION

Finance Director Norman began by reviewing the following highlights from her annual reports:

- The financial market continues to be monitored for service and fee structure satisfaction with the Town's operating accounts.
- The 401-K benefit for general employees increased to 3% for the FY 2015 budget year.
- A revised Employee Handbook was adopted.
- Technology/software upgrades were being investigated.
- Work continued on cross-training of employees.
- Enhancement of the Town's website continued.

Ms. Norman then reviewed the following ongoing initiatives:

- Continuation of the revenue and expense analysis with Robert Segal, CPA to identify any areas where the Town could increase revenue or reduce expenses - Ms. Norman stated no major items had been reported as of yet.
- Audio visual improvements in the Council room
- Accounts payable vendor information update – Ms. Norman advised that the utility account informational updates had proven to be a success; therefore, accounts payable vendor updates would be acquired.
- Town Hall minor renovations
- OSHA – Ms. Norman stated the goal was to appoint a safety officer in each Town department to monitor safety compliance.

- Employee Handbook Update – With continued Fair Labor Standard Acts (FLSA) as well as Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), it would be necessary to regularly update the Employee Handbook.
- Computer Hardware/Software Upgrade - Ms. Norman advised that her department was looking to upgrade the payroll system in the near future. She also advised that an upgrade was needed in order for customers to pay by credit/debit card payments at Town Hall. Council agreed that this function was needed.
- Asset Tagging System
- Employee 401-K Benefit
- Environmental Conservation Initiatives
- Cross Training/Organizational Efficiency
- Website Maintenance and Improvement – Several aspects of other municipal websites were viewed and discussed in order to get ideas for enhancements to the Town’s website. Council agreed that the Town’s website needed to be revamped. Town Manager Fogleman advised that some funding had been set aside for this purpose, but more may be needed.

In closing, Town Manager Fogleman thanked Ms. Norman and her staff for the great job they do.

PARKS & RECREATION

Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown reviewed the following highlights from her 2014 annual reports:

- An example of new chairs for the Town Council Chambers, with quote – Ms. Brown showed examples for chairs that had been ordered for the American Legion Building and asked for input from Council regarding the purchase of the same chairs for the Council Chambers for approximately \$27.00 each. Town Manager Fogleman stated that he would look into how many chairs would be needed for the Council Chambers and get back with Council regarding this issue.
- Memorial Park bench refurbishing- Ms. Brown advised that the benches located in Memorial Park were in the process of being refurbished by her department.
- Landscaping, mulching, etc. had been redone in several areas, such as in front of Town Hall, Memorial Park, etc.
- Parks & Recreation programs and events – Ms. Brown advised that one of the newer events offered by her department, “Movies in the Park” had proven to be a success and would be continued in the coming year.
- Winter lights – Ms. Brown asked for Council’s direction regarding the schedule for the white winter lights that are put up in January. Consensus was to take the winter lighting down, weather permitting, on or around the first day of spring each year.
- The fee schedule for Parks & Recreation facilities was discussed and increases were approved for the public swim at Robbins Pool and the facility rental fee for the American Legion Building.

- Part-time landscaping support possibly becoming a full-time position was also discussed. Council asked Town Manager Fogleman to get numbers for them showing what this would cost. Council agreed that this position was needed.

Ms. Brown and Town Manager Fogleman also mentioned a request they had received regarding a dog park located on Sunset Drive. Council stated the Town had more pressing needs at this time.

Mr. Fogleman also stated that a suggestion had been made regarding an ice rink in Town. It was also the consensus of Council to not pursue this item.

Council and Mr. Fogleman thanked Ms. Brown and her staff for the great job they did.

PLANNING & INSPECTION

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock began his 2014 overview with Council regarding the following items:

- Twelve new homes had been constructed in the past year; in 2008 there had been 22 new homes constructed, however, with the economic downturn, there was a large decrease in new construction, but it looked as if there was an upward trend
- Comprehensive Plan updated was completed
- Conditional Use Zoning had been approved
- Land Use Code amendments allowing flexibility with metal roofing on commercial buildings was approved
- Outdoor display on public sidewalks standards and restrictions for businesses to follow was approved
- Sandwich boards had been discussed, but not approved
- CUP's for the Martin House renovations and improvements to the Goodwin Weaver building on Cornish by Enterline & Russell
- Accessory apartments were discussed briefly. It was the consensus of Council to move forward with consideration of the exception option only and that no further changes to the Town Ordinance regarding this issue be made. Council requested that Mr. Rothrock keep a list of any requests that he received regarding this issue for possible future Council consideration.

Town Manager Fogleman asked if Council wished to discuss the changes to the Town's Sign Ordinance pertaining to areas where the speed limit exceeded 35 mph during the April meeting or to postpone it until the May meeting as requested by a Council member who could not be at the April meeting. Council agreed this item needed to be discussed in April as planned.

Planning Director stated the first "Neighborhood Meeting" after conditional use zoning had been passed was scheduled for Thursday, March 26th for residents who lived near

the Wes Carter property located at 114 Skyland View Drive. Mr. Rothrock invited Council to attend.

Council then thanked Mr. Rothrock and his staff for their hard work.

TDA

Tracy Brown, TDA Director, and Kent Tarbutton were present for the following joint meeting between Council and TDA.

Mr. Brown gave the following highlights:

- 2014 was a good year; revenue was up by approximately 7.8% from last year.
- The websites for Winterfest, the Wine Festival, and Blowing Rock.com had been revised.
- Another survey through ECU had been done with record participation
- Work had begun on the FY 2016 budget
- It had been a great year for advertising and preparations had already begun for 2015 regarding media plans
- TDA had worked extensively with event planners as well as with the Chamber of Commerce regarding upcoming scheduled events for the area

Mayor Pro-tem Yount asked what Council could do to assist the TDA. Mr. Brown asked that Council continue to support to the TDA in their endeavors.

At the conclusion of the work session, Town Manager Fogleman gave a summary of the items that had been discussed with each department.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

MAYOR

PRO-TEM

Albert Yount

ATTEST

Sharon Greene, Town Clerk