

**Town of Blowing Rock
Special Departmental Work Session
Tuesday, March 24, 2015**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council continued their annual Departmental Work Session on Tuesday, March 24, 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, Public Works and Utilities Director Mike Wilcox, Public Works and Utilities Superintendent Matt Blackburn, Police Chief Tony Jones, Fire Chief Kent Graham, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

PUBLIC WORKS/UTILITIES

Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Blackburn reviewed the following highlights from their 2014 monthly reports:

- A pressure reducing valve was replaced on Hwy 221 in April 2014. The valve was obsolete and parts were hard to find. Since it was repaired there have been no further problems.
- There were no sanitary sewer overflows to report in 2014. There were four blockages but no overflows.

The following initiatives were discussed:

- Thirty-nine (39) out of 352 fire hydrants are in need of attention, 22 of the 39 do not have the necessary valves in order to make repairs without the main water line being turned off to those areas. The necessary equipment to make these repairs costs approximately \$54,000. Town Manager Fogleman stated he thought it was feasible to purchase the machine and the Town could look into some cost-sharing possibilities. It was the consensus of Council to investigate purchasing the machine and possibly rent it to other areas as long as Town employees operate the equipment.
- Preparation work is being done for the start of construction on the new Public Works Facility and demolition of the old facility.
- Contracted services are needed to clean up the lot on Cone Rd where debris has been placed. Multiple loads of dirt, leaves, debris, etc. need to be hauled away. Possibly some debris could be used on Quail Hollow.
- Repainting of street lines is needed.

- Stamped crosswalks on Main Street need to be repainted and are being planned
- Out of the 265 street signs in Town, 160 are 4-inch signs and 105 are 6-inch signs, implementation of all 6-inch signs is the goal eventually. Any remaining 3-inch signs need to be replaced in the near future. The approximate upgrade cost would be \$11,500. Council decided this item needed to be placed on the priority list for the near future.
- Planned improvements to the outside of the old Fire Station building, including removal of stairway on the side, repainting the outside, securing all doors, restriping areas for additional employee parking and removing siren and tower. Council suggested that staff get in touch with an art class at ASU regarding a mural being painted on the building.

Council and Mr. Fogleman thanked Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Blackburn for their great work and that of their staff members.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The following 2014 departmental highlights were reviewed by Chief Tony Jones:

- Parking fees
- New employees hired
- Promotion of Dan White to Lieutenant
- Improvements made to the evidence holding room at a savings of \$10,000-\$20,000 due to the work being completed by the Public Works Department. New evidence procedure working well and two employees being sent to evidence procedure update class
- Extensive work completed by Sharon Vandyke on evidence room improvements and procedures

The following upcoming initiatives were discussed:

- Continue community involvement
- Expansion of needed equipment – Currently the department has four (4) body worn cameras that are rotated by shift. Eight (8) more cameras are needed.
- Improvement of after-hours service – Considering several part-time employees to be at the Police Station on weekends, holidays, and from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday – Sunday.
- A School Resource Officer/Bike Patrol/ Additional Summer Staffing (All in one position) would make Blowing Rock School a safer environment for the children and a positive relations tool to help with traffic flow, etc.
- Miscellaneous projects – Golf Cart Program, weapon change out, training room tables and chairs, etc.

Chief Jones explained the officers had different types of weapons and there was a need for unification in that area.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Kent Graham gave a synopsis of the following 2014 Annual Report highlights:

- Several capital projects were completed with the redistribution of sales tax funds
- Call volume distribution list, spike in calls in months of July and October – a total of 1,000 calls in 2014
- Likelihood of simultaneous calls due to being thinly staffed – this happened recently during a working fire, there were three other calls during that period
- Tracking calls by hour due to possibly getting a 12-hour ambulance base, need to know which 12 hours out of 24 hours the ambulance would be needed most
- Public education going very well
- Site work being done for Station III and fund raising efforts planned

Council had questions regarding the Junior Firefighter Program and recruitment of new volunteers. Chief Graham commented that Blowing Rock, at one time, had a long-running Junior Firefighter Program; however a lot of time and money was spent that turned out to be a recruitment and preparation program for people who graduated and went to other departments in their own areas. Chief Graham also advised that volunteer recruitment requirements had been loosened; only 36 hours of training per year is now required by the State.

The need for an ambulance base was discussed. Chief Graham stated that Deep Gap is now asking for a base in their district as well. Consensus was to keep pursuing the needed base for the Blowing Rock area as well as keeping in touch with Watauga County as to their method of deciding who will receive the ambulance base next.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the work session was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

**MAYOR
PRO-TEM**

Albert Yount

ATTEST

Sharon Greene, Town Clerk