

**Draft**

**Planning and Zoning Board**

**Minutes**

**Thursday, October 16, 2014**

**5:30 p.m.**

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, October 16, 2014 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Chairman West called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Members present were David Harwood, Lisa Stripling, David Laughter, Alice Roess, Wes Carter and Genie Starnes. Members absent were Rich Scheurer and Natalie Bovino. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Administrative Assistant Tammy Bentley.

Chairman West asked if there were any changes to the minutes. There were none. *Ms. Roess made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Starnes. All members were in favor of the motion.*

**Draft Ordinance – Wireless Antennas**

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report. In 2010, the Town Council amended the Land Use Code establishing separation standards of 500 feet between antennas in an effort to eliminate their proliferation. Blue Ridge Electric and Verizon Wireless are partnering to bring small cell technology to our community and in determining the location for these small antennas discovered that the 500 foot separation requirement is too restrictive. Town staff is recommending a draft ordinance amendment that would eliminate the antenna separation requirement, but would maintain all the other standards related to antenna placement, design, height and color.

Ms. Roess asked if the antennas would be placed in commercial areas only. Mr. Rothrock said they would be placed throughout Town.

Mr. Harwood asked if these antenna have the big electric boxes, like the older ones. Mr. Rothrock said that the boxes have a smaller profile to match the width of the utility poles.

Ms. Starnes asked, if the Town eliminates the utility poles on Main Street, how would impact this project. Mr. Rothrock said that there will be only two antennas placed on Main Street.

Ms. Roess asked if there would be any cost to the Town. Mr. Rothrock said that the utility companies will bear the expense of the project.

Chairman West asked how long the permit would be valid without action. Mr. Rothrock said the zoning permit is valid for one year.

Mr. Carter asked if this would keep other companies from coming to the area, to which Mr. Rothrock responded no.

Mr. Carter asked for confirmation that these antennas would not be considered towers. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Chairman West asked for confirmation that the old equipment is not part of this technology. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Mr. Carter asked the intent of the second sentence in section 16-18.11.3. Mr. Rothrock responded that the intent is for appearance purposes.

Mr. Carter asked if Blue Ridge Electric could install new poles for the placement of these antennas. Mr. Rothrock confirmed. Mr. Carter asked if the utility could place the poles anywhere. Mr. Rothrock responded that the Town does not have the authority to regulate utility poles.

Ms. Stripling asked if the poles placed for antennas would also have to carry utility lines. Mr. Rothrock said that the poles could be just for the antennas. He added that the Town can regulate towers but not utility poles.

Mr. Harwood stated that ultimately Blue Ridge Electric gets to decide where the antennas are located since they own the poles. Mr. Rothrock confirmed and added that Verizon and Blue Ridge Electric were using existing poles for antenna placement.

Mr. Harwood asked if Verizon could approach a private property owner to place antennas on their property. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Chairman West said that as he reads the tower ordinance these utility poles could be considered towers. He added that he did not think it is OK for anyone just to erect poles for antennas and that this would require a CUP.

Mr. Rothrock responded that our ordinance is strong on monopoles and telecommunications towers. He added that the application process would cover monopoles or utility poles disguised as a monopole.

Mr. Carter said that he has a problem with adding more poles and feels that antennas should be added to existing poles.

Mr. Rothrock said that this technology requires a low-to-the-ground installation, not the height of telecommunication towers or monopoles.

Chairman West noted that Mr. Rothrock determines whether a pole is a utility pole or a telecommunication tower.

Ms. Stripling asked if there is a distance number for separation in the problem areas. Mr. Rothrock said we are trying to avoid imposing limits that would require the applicant to return if a set separation distance is too limiting.

Mr. Carter suggested adding “and their locations” after structures in the second sentence of 16-18.11-3.

*Mr. Carter made a motion to send the draft ordinance to Town Council as amended, seconded by Mr. Laughter. All members were in favor of the motion.*

### **Other Business**

Mr. Rothrock gave Board members a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan and suggested that the Board be looking at the top 10 list and think about what the Board wants to look at before the November meeting. Chairman West pointed out that the last 30 pages of the Comprehensive Plan are implementation steps.

*Ms. Roess made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Stripling. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Chairman West adjourned the meeting at 6:15 pm.

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Chairman Jim West

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Tammy Bentley, Administrative Assistant