

DRAFT
MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Annual Departmental Meeting
March 15, 2016

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council began their annual departmental meetings on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. in the Parks & Recreation Center located at 145 Park Avenue, Blowing Rock, N.C. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Mayor Pro-tem Albert Yount and Council Members Jim Steele, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson and Ray Pickett. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Fogleman and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES

Public Works and Utilities Director, Mike Wilcox and Assistant Director, Matt Blackburn began by updating Council on their accomplishments for the year 2015.

Mr. Blackburn reviewed several projects their department had accomplished, such as, helping with the construction of the Rotary Gazebo in Memorial Park, remodeling the kitchen at the American Legion building, and rebuilding the rock monument at Broyhill Park.

Mr. Blackburn mentioned that 150 tons of salt had been used this past winter, which was approximately one-half of their allotment for the year.

The Field Operations Department washed 10,000 Sq. Ft. of sewer lines and smoked several manholes to help with Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) problems.

According to Mr. Blackburn, there were 12 major water leaks during the past year and the Public Works Department continued to work toward finding reasons for any unaccounted for water.

The Public Works Department also helped the Fire Department with fire hydrant maintenance work.

In the Water/Wastewater Operations Department, Mr. Blackburn mentioned the clear-well tank had been cleaned and the chemical feed pumps repaired.

The Sanitation Department had collected 1,800 tons of garbage/debris, an 11% increase over the previous year. He advised the increase was due to debris from the old Public Works building that was torn down and from the old gazebo in Memorial Park that was also added to the totals.

Mr. Blackburn stated that according to Republic Services, the Town's recycling fees for the year had decreased somewhat; however, cardboard recycling had increased slightly.

24 Woodlawn Cemetery plots were sold in 2015 and 16 plots were opened by the Town. The roof on the mausoleum was repaired and the entrance gate and sign were repainted. Council commended the Public Works Department on the improved appearance of the cemetery.

Council Member Matheson asked if the Public Works Department had ever thought about looking into refurbished vehicles from NCDOT. Mr. Wilcox stated that currently they had not, but would check on the feasibility of the idea.

Council members asked about the status of the water meter pilot program. Mr. Blackburn explained that the majority of the pilot meters had been installed, however there were approximately 15 meters yet to be installed. He further explained how the pilot program was working so far and future expectations for the program.

Mr. Blackburn then discussed upcoming projects for 2016. He mentioned a storage shelter was needed at the stock pile yard to provide storage for PVC and ductile iron pipes, new fire hydrants, valves, etc. This type of storage shelter would greatly improve the appearance of that area. Council agreed that the area needed to be cleaned up and made to look better. Several options were discussed. Council asked Mr. Blackburn to check on the cost of this project.

Mr. Blackburn advised that several fire hydrants had been replaced in 2015 and several more had been identified that needed valves installed. This project would continue to be done in coordination with the Fire Department in order to prioritize the necessary repairs/replacements in the upcoming year.

Mr. Blackburn explained that the Public Works Department had plans to divide the Town into four zones in order for crews to spend one week in each zone chipping and collecting leaves to help improve customer service. Council members asked Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Wilcox to devise a plan so that residents who utilized this service more than the once a month and twice a year pick up allowed, would be charged for these great services.

Mr. Blackburn also discussed a project management schedule of projects for the Public Works and Utilities Department to include investigation of inflow and infiltration sources, easement clearing, and Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) inspection program.

Mr. Blackburn stated that their department would inform the public of scheduled project dates to allow for better coordination and provide a higher level of customer service

regarding these issues. Council also asked that this information be included in the Town's newsletter.

ADMINISTRATION

Finance Director Nicole Norman updated Council on various items in her department. She advised that work continued on the vault retention schedule. She mentioned that employee notices were now being sent electronically and the Town's website was in the first stages of redesign.

The Town Hall kitchen/breakroom renovation project is being planned.

Ms. Norman advised that it would be beneficial for a safety officer to be designated for each department to keep all departments better in sync with OSHA regulations in their field of work. A coordinated schedule and funding would also be needed for necessary training of the designees.

Ms. Norman commented she hoped to have an updated payroll system in place by June 1, 2016 and that her department was looking to explore a possible update to the work order system with more mobile capability among other attributes.

Town audit and engineering requests for proposals were also being worked on.

Town Manager Fogleman explained that statewide grants were available for installation of two car charging stations. He suggested possibly installing a charging station in the lower level of the American Legion Parking Deck and possibly coordinating with Tanger Outlets in order to install one in that area. Other potential areas were discussed.

Ms. Norman advised that credit card processing at Town Hall was being investigated, as well as a new design for the Around the Rock Newsletter to be designed in concert with the Town's final website design. Ms. Norman advised the Town had recently closed on the General Obligation Bond funding.

Council Member Sweeting asked about the equipment tagging system. Ms. Norman stated her department would strive to get this completed.

PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Parks & Recreation Director, Jennifer Brown reviewed several facility improvements within her department with Council. She commented that 39 benches located within the various Town parks had been refurbished.

The Rotary gazebo in had been rebuilt and several landscaping improvements were completed in Memorial Park, at Town Hall, Broyhill Parks, etc. Ms. Brown reviewed other improvements that had been completed by her department.

Ms. Brown updated Council on several programs such as Summer Day Camp, T-Ball, Movies in the Park, fitness classes, etc. Ms. Brown commented the Movies in the Park event had proven to be successful. She spoke briefly with Council regarding sponsorship options for that event. Council consensus was to maintain the current status of Movies in the Park.

Ms. Brown reviewed upcoming improvements that were planned, such as work at Davant Field, improvements to the Parks & Recreation building, Broyhill drainage repairs, pavers to be installed in the picnic area behind Town Hall, etc.

Ms. Brown stated a much needed improvement was the replacement of the equipment building (often referred to as the "hut") located in Memorial Park and the cost would be approximately \$2,000. Council agreed to replace the building.

Ms. Brown stated that she had spoken to Landscape Specialist, Chris Pate regarding his thoughts on the feasibility of a greenhouse in order to grow flowers to be used around Town. Mr. Pate didn't feel a greenhouse would be the most feasible idea due to the weather in this area, etc.

Ms. Brown also mentioned that she had spoken with Mr. Pate regarding the idea of planters being placed on the trash receptacles and they both agreed this would not be functional due to several reasons.

Ms. Brown requested the winter lighting be taken down the following week due to the possibility of bad weather. Council agreed to the removal of the lighting prior to the March 31 deadline.

Town Manager Fogleman then updated Council regarding the status of the Legacy Trail easements, all of which one property owner has already agreed to, and several other items of interest.

Ms. Brown advised that the Bridge Club had made many improvements to the Club House located on Clark Street. Council requested that Ms. Brown send a letter to the Bridge Club thanking them for their generosity.

Council also discussed the idea of approaching the Watauga County TDA regarding funding for special events.

Council inquired about the salary line at the pool being larger than in previous years. Ms. Brown explained that it was hard to maintain a full staff of lifeguards at the pool each year. She continued to say, that this past summer she had enlisted the help of Greg Frank from the Fire Department who is a Certified Lifeguard. Ms. Brown further said that for the upcoming season, a lifeguard certification class, at no cost to the employee, would be offered by Mr. Frank. Once the employee received their certification, they would have to agree to work the entire summer.

Council Member Steele asked about the fee schedule for the pool as well as the price of concessions. Council commended Ms. Brown on the lifeguard certification idea.

PLANNING & INSPECTIONS

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock advised that new construction values for the Town had reached \$14 million this past year.

He also reviewed several Land Use Code changes that were made. Mr. Rothrock stated the Wes Carter property was the only conditional rezoning request.

Mr. Rothrock stated the Town has received two (2) proposals for the Ice House located on Maple Street, however, it had been decided that the Town should do the remodeling/renovation of the building and then offer it for lease. Estimated costs for this project were from \$34,000 to \$42,000. Town Manager Fogleman advised the Town is anticipating receiving money from the ABC Store that could be used toward the project. He also stated the Town could stipulate what type of business could be allowed in the Ice House building in the next request for lease proposals.

Planning Director Rothrock showed Council a rendering of a proposed addition of a porte cochere to the First Baptist Church located on Sunset Drive. It was the consensus of Council for this request to go through the conditional use process.

Town Manager Fogleman and Planning Director Rothrock reviewed several items with Council. They advised that White Fence Farms had purchased the Mattar/Sweeting building on Sunset Drive and would be renovating the building to be used as a short-term rental. They had requested that their trademark tractor be parked in the front of the building. Council was not in favor of allowing the tractor to be parked in the front yard, as they felt this would constitute a sign.

Mr. Fogleman showed Council several options regarding lighting along Valley Boulevard and asked that Council review the options and provide feedback on which they preferred.

Mr. Fogleman also discussed the option of paver installation instead of concrete islands on Hwy. 321, especially at the seven intersections along the widening project. Mr. Fogleman stated the cost for NCDOT to install pavers in these areas would be \$165,938. He advised the Town could purchase a paver saw for approximately \$6,000 and Town employees could install pavers in smaller sections allowing approximately 2-3 days for each intersection. The total cost would be \$23,000 for seven (7) intersections, including allocated labor. He asked Council to provide feedback about this proposal as well.

Mr. Fogleman also discussed the Gateway/Median Improvements with Council. He shared a rendering with Council of the gateway at the intersection of Sunset Drive and Valley Boulevard and asked them to provide feedback on this as well. Discussion pertaining to these items would be continued during the meeting the following night.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

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