

Minutes

Special Meeting

January 24 and January 25, 2002

The Mayor and Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina on January 24 and January 25. Present were Mayor J. B. Lawrence, Commissioners Barbara Ball, Terry Lentz, Keith Tester, Rita Wiseman, and David Wray. Staff members present were Town Manager Don Holycross and Town Clerk Barbara Beach. Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. The following matters were discussed:

1. Appointments to volunteer boards. Council members considered the names of several citizens requesting appointments, but took no final action on this matter.
2. Members then discussed the 2001 Parking Study, and Mr. Tester suggested that a special task force be appointed to study parking and plan long term growth for the Town. The results of this study would be used to implement a plan to manage all aspects of future needs for major improvement projects for the Town. Members agreed this idea has merit, but no action was taken at this time.
3. Council members discussed their ideas for a new vision for the downtown area: wider

sidewalks, underground utilities, tables and benches, landscaping, etc. Council then considered a concept to replace the existing directional signs on Main Street with two or three central signs that would show all downtown businesses. Town Staff would be able to replace the text as needed and new businesses would not have to wait on a new signboard to be constructed for their inclusion on the sign. No final action was taken on any of these items, and Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting at 12:05 p.m. for lunch.

The meeting was reconvened at 1:25 p.m. for the second session of the day. Council members discussed: 4) Council variances and agreed that they would like to pursue the idea of adding flexibility to the Code so that they could approve projects that meet the spirit of the Code, but not necessarily all of the technical requirements.

5. Council members discussed the addition of a "Town Center District" zone to cover the immediate downtown area. The new zone would change the existing Central Business zone to four zones: Town Center East, Town Center West, CB20 with a twenty-foot street setback, and CB30, with a thirty-foot street setback. Additional possible setbacks in Town Center District were discussed, with a proposal to mandate street setbacks at 35 feet for Town Center West, and side and rear yard setbacks at four feet. The Council also requested that the setbacks in the IO, HMC, HSG, and PGS zoning districts should be the same as CB20. Members debated the merits of this proposal, but no final action was taken on the proposal.

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6. A request from the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission for the addition of a new position of town gardener was also considered, with discussion centering on the questions of the classification of the position and the person or entity that would supervise the position. Mr. Holycross will consult with other towns and provide additional information to Council at a later meeting.

7. Installation of a web camera. Council discussed possible locations in Town for the web camera purchased by the Merchants Association, but no action was taken, and Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Friday, January 25, 2002, and the Mayor and Council members discussed item 8) Refunding of sanitary sewer bonds. They agreed by consensus that the idea had merit and asked Mr. Holycross to bring additional information to Council at a regular meeting.

9) An increase in the Occupancy Tax rate was also evaluated, but no action was taken on the matter.

10) Mayor Lawrence ordered the meeting convened in closed session for discussion of real property acquisition under authorization of NC General Statutes 143-318.11(5).

11) Following this discussion, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting in open session. Council members discussed the agenda item of major improvement projects. Council reviewed a project schedule for the year 2002 and no action was taken on this topic.

Members agreed to add an agenda item and discussed the street easement held by the Town on Grandfather Avenue. No action was taken on this item and Mayor Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m. on Friday, January 25.

Mayor J. B. Lawrence

Barbara G. Beach, Town Clerk