

MINUTES

Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, May 20, 2003

The Mayor and Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special called session on Tuesday, May 20, 2003, at 4:00 p.m. Present were Mayor J. B. Lawrence, Commissioners Barbara Ball, Terry Lentz, Keith Tester, Rita Wiseman, and David Wray. Also present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran and Town Clerk Barbara Beach.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a second budget work session. Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order. Mr. Hildebran presented sheets showing the proposed cuts from the May 19 meeting, and reviewed cost estimates for salary increases for employees. Police Chief Owen Tolbert requested merit increases for members of his department based on the need for full staffing during sick and vacation leave. He also stated that based on the length of time for training of officers and dispatchers, he believes the Town needs to retain employees. Council members discussed the pros and cons of paying a merit increase on July 1 or January 1, 2004. Mr. Tester suggested that the Town set aside \$10,000 in salary reserve, and pay the requested merit increase to designated Police Department employees on January 1. The remaining reserve funds will be available to other department heads to request merit raises for deserving employees. This will allow Mr. Hildebran time to begin the transition process to a merit pay plan.

Mr. Tester also noted that the proposed cuts would allow a decrease in the tax rate of two cents, but he would prefer that the rate be reduced only one cent, and the additional funds be allocated between fund balance and the capital project fund. He believes the Town should start adding to fund balance with a \$50,000 contribution each year.

Mr. Hildebran reviewed the Five-year Capital Improvement Plan for each department, and Council discussed some items on the list in greater detail.

Mr. Wray introduced a discussion of the Recycling program, recommending that the Town begin hauling cardboard to the recycling area of the County landfill. This would result in no tipping fees for the cardboard, and there would be no revenue. Council members discussed this plan, and agreed that solid waste fees would be increased, and businesses would need to contract with a private service for collection of glass. Mr. Wray also recommended that the Town discontinue cardboard pickup at Tanger Shoppes on the Parkway, and that the Town mandate they contract with a private company for that service. Mr. Lentz suggested that all Council members be involved in meetings with GDS or other private companies so that everyone will have input into these discussions. The two employees in the Recycling department will be reassigned to other town departments.

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Council members agreed that Mr. Hildebran re-calculate the budget based on these proposals, and submit a new draft budget to them for consideration. They requested a reduction in the tax rate of one cent to one and one half cents. No final action was taken on the draft budget. The budget will be reviewed again at the public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, June 10 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There was no further business and Mayor Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

J. B. Lawrence,
Mayor

Barbara G. Beach, Town Clerk