

# MINUTES

## Council Retreat

January 19 – 20, 2004

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session on Monday, January 19, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. 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 retreat to discuss plans and issues of the Town for the upcoming fiscal year and longer term planning for up to ten years. The following topics were discussed during the first morning session:

### Board Appointments

It was the consensus of the Board that the following persons be asked to serve on volunteer boards as shown below.

Planning Board and Board of Adjustment appointments are effective at close of March 2004 meeting and expire as shown below.

**Planning Board** - Doug Drury, Jim Steele, Cullie Tarleton – all to be appointed

to three-year terms ending 2007

**Board of Adjustment** - Mark Klein and Lowell Thomas – Re-appointed to three-

year terms ending 2007

Ron Oberle - appoint to an unexpired term ending 2005

Bob McCants – appoint to a three-year term as an alternate member, ending in 2007

Jerry Starnes – appoint to an unexpired term as an alternate member, ending in 2006

**ABC Board** – Bob Hess, re-appoint to a three-year term, effective July 1, 2004

and ending June 30, 2007

**Tourism Development Authority**-Kent Tarbutton, Lodging representative, three-year

term expiring 2007

Phil Pickett, Lodging, two-year term expiring 2006  
Bernard Keele, Tourism, three year term expiring

2007, Chairman

Keith Tester, Tourism, two-year term expiring 2006

Lynn Drury, Representative at large, one year term

expiring 2005

All TDA appointments will be effective February 10, 2004

No final action was taken on these proposed appointments, pending contact with these citizens and final action to be made at the February 10 Council meeting.

### **Administration Issues**

Mr. Hildebran and Mrs. Beach advised Council that the heating system for Town Hall is ailing and will need to be replaced in the new budget year. Mr. Lentz suggested that Mr. Hildebran try to find available funds in the current budget for replacement of both heating systems in Town Hall. He believes that contractors will have greater availability now than in the summer.

Mrs. Beach also reported that the carpeting in Town Hall needs replacing, as it is badly worn. This item will be included in the list of requested capital improvements for the upcoming budget year. Council members suggested that prices be obtained for new carpet, including patterned carpet or carpet squares for the lobby area.

### **Banking Services**

Council also discussed obtaining Requests for Proposal for Financial Services from area banks. Members agreed that it is important to get the best value possible in the areas of checking, savings, etc. as well as other banking services we need to operate our Town in the most efficient manner. Mr. Hildebran and Mrs. Beach and will work on this objective, and plan to deal with banks that have branches in the town.

### **Position Upgrade**

Mrs. Beach advised Council that Laura Brown has resigned from her position with the Town, and requested that the position be upgraded to a full time position. Council agreed to the proposal.

### **Web-based Quarterly Newsletter**

Mr. Hildebran proposed sending a web based quarterly newsletter to the citizens of the Town. The newsletter would include upcoming events and general information concerning the Town. Members thought it should contain brief articles with links to further information, and also that it should be published in the newspaper for citizens who do not use computers.

### **Budgetary/Financial Issues**

Mr. Hildebran furnished information concerning a proposed **Water/Sewer Rate Study** which would help the Town recover the full cost of operations, finance new capital improvements and infrastructure, evaluate alternative rate structures, and insure an equitable rate structure for the citizens of the Town. He provided the names of area consultants that may be hired for this purpose. Council members agreed that this would be helpful. Mr. Hildebran will pursue this course for the 2004-2005 budget year.

Council discussed their expectations of the **Tourism Development Authority (TDA)** and its impact on the Town budget in the coming budget year.

### **Retreat Salary Issues**

Police Chief Tolbert had submitted a request for interim merit salary increases based on funds earmarked for this purpose in the 2003-2004 fiscal year budget. After discussion of this request, Council members agreed that Mr. Tolbert would be allowed \$1,800 to allocate to his employees as he sees fit. However, he must have evidence of formal evaluations for the employees he selects for merit increases.

### **Planning Issues**

**Comprehensive Plan** - Council members discussed the draft Comprehensive Plan and agreed that it was a good first start. Mr. Tester suggested that the action plan should be made more realistic, more visual, and highlight what is currently underway.

Other issues discussed were extension of the ETJ area and possible areas for annexation. Mr. Lentz suggested that an upcoming issue will be water and sewer hookups on Goforth Road.

Mr. Hildebran advised Council that the **Geographic Information System (GIS)** is ahead of schedule. Ms. Wiseman inquired if we should wait until July 1 for more funding for the project. Mr. Hildebran says it will not hold us back, most of the initial work has been done.

**Master Sign Plan** - Mr. Hildebran also reported that Kevin Rothrock is meeting soon with representatives of Southwood Corporation. Council members and citizens will have opportunities for input into the plan, also.

Council members discussed the **Master Sidewalk Plan** and agreed they would prefer to replace sidewalks, instead of trying to repair deteriorated areas.

### **Public Safety (Police/Emergency Services) Issues**

Board members discussed the need for a new **Emergency Services Building**. Perhaps a state or federal grant may be obtained to help with getting a low interest rate loan so that this goal can be accomplished in three to five years.

Mayor Lawrence called for a recess for lunch at 12:10 p.m. He re-convened the meeting at 2:10 p.m. for the afternoon session.

### **Public Works Issues**

Mr. Hildebran provided updates on various sidewalk projects in progress, and suggested that a comprehensive stormwater study should be done.

### **Parks & Recreation/Landscaping) Issues**

Council discussed the Recreation Department report from Jamie Saitta. The swimming pool is the priority major maintenance concern for recreation department. Many repairs are needed and she is considering hiring a recreation planner. Council also considered whether adjacent property might be available to purchase to house future Recreation offices. Also, Mrs. Saitta requested permission to fill the vacant position for an **assistant recreation director** and Council agreed by consensus to approve the request.

Prior to 1999, Council appointed citizens to the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission (BRAAC). In February of that year, Council made a decision to allow BRAAC to choose their own members. Now, Council members considered whether they should reinstate the appointment process. Members agreed that they will begin appointing members to BRAAC again to comply with provisions of the Town Code. Mrs. Ball pointed out that BRAAC is a valuable group in the Town. Mr. Wray suggested that appropriate duties be transferred from BRAAC to the Landscape Specialist position. Mr. Tester recommended that the relationship between the Landscape Specialist position and BRAAC be better defined so that the Appearance Commission supports the paid position. Mr. Hildebran will work on developing a plan to formulate the relationship.

### **Water/Wastewater Issues**

Council members also reviewed the need for a **Water/Sewer Master Plan**, including plans to rehabilitate or add sewer lines.

Mr. Hildebran presented a list of water/sewer grant and loan opportunities that the Town may pursue for funding of capital projects. He also noted the necessity of adopting new ordinances to regulate the dumping of fats, oil, and grease into the sewer system and to require cross connection control (back flow prevention devices) for water lines. He reviewed sample ordinances to deal with these concerns.

Mr. Hildebran also introduced a proposal for Automated Meter Reading and suggested that Council consider funding this type of system to reduce costs associated with reading water meters and to make our billing more cost efficient. Johnny Lentz will be meeting with representatives from the company to obtain estimated costs of converting to a new meter system.

### **Other Issues**

Council also reviewed contracted engineering services, and the attorney/Council relationship.

**Speed Hump Policy** - Council members discussed whether the Town should adopt a policy to deal with requests for the installation of speed humps. Members agreed by consensus that the Town has too many speed humps, and that no more should be constructed. They agreed that other traffic calming methods should be used. Council asked that speed limits for all streets in Town be reviewed.

**Street Lights Policy** - Mr. Hildebran asked whether Council wants to develop a standard policy for street lights. Council members discussed the pros and cons. Mrs. Ball and Mr. Tester stated that citizens in older neighborhoods do not want streetlights, and members agreed that a policy is not needed.

### **Capital Improvements**

Mr. Hildebran reviewed the Fleet Capital Replacement list, and also the five-year plan for capital projects. Council also reviewed recent activity of the Conservation Trust Property Repayment/Reservoir Project, proposed connection with the Town of Boone water system, and possible construction of an intake at Payne Branch.

At 5:00 p.m., Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting for the evening.

On Tuesday, January 20, 2004, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Council reviewed their work from the previous day. They discussed vehicle needs for various town departments. They also reviewed the five-year capital plan, and general fund and water sewer capital projects, current and future.

There was no further business, and Mayor Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

