

# MINUTES

## Town of Blowing Rock

### Board of Commissioners Meeting

December 1, 2005

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Thursday, December 1, 2005 in the Town Hall Council Chambers. Present at the meeting were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Keith Tester, Terry Lentz, Rita Wiseman, and David Wray. Commissioner-Elect Tommy Klutz also attended. Staff members present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Public Works Director Johnny Lentz, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

Mr. R.L. Sudderth a representative of the Blowing Rock Fire Department and Mr. Aaron Miller representing of the Blowing Rock Rescue Squad were in attendance.

#### Call to Order

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

#### Emergency Services Building

Town Manager Hildebran introduced Scott Garner of Garner & Brown Architects PA and Shad Walters of McGill Associates.

Mr. Garner presented Council with the following agenda:

#### **Building Goals**

Mr. Garner stated the intent was to design a building that fit the image of Blowing Rock and met the needs of the Fire and Rescue Departments for the next 40 to 50 years.

## **Building Program**

Mr. Garner advised even though the 2-acre lot was not an ideal building site for the project, he enjoyed the challenge of designing a two-story building that, not only met the department's needs, but meshed well with the site's uniqueness. Some of the most challenging aspects with designing the project according to Mr. Garner were, the proposed site having sixteen (16) sides, the Town's setback standards, being unable to build to the flood plain, the location of a sewer line on the property, as well as the steep terrain.

## **Building Design**

A footprint of the two-story, 18,500 sq.ft building was presented to Council for their review. Due to the topography of the site the proposed building was positioned closer to the front of the site with possibly a 12-14ft. retaining wall located in the rear of the project. Some amenities mentioned were vehicle bays to accommodate at least four rescue vehicles, drive-thru bays to accommodate eight fire trucks and an elevator so that both levels could be handicap-accessible. The entire building consisted of 21,800 sq. ft. with the lower level having 10,988 sq.ft., 4,124sq.ft in the intermediate level, 6,688sq.ft, of living area in the upper level, for approximately 12 fire and EMS personnel. Classrooms to accommodate at least 40 people were located on the upper level.

Commissioner Tester inquired, with anticipated growth of the department, would the proposed building continue to meet their needs. EMS Director Kent Graham stated that possibly in the future the amount of equipment would reduce, but he anticipated the number of staff to increase, due to having less volunteers in the future. Mr. Graham felt the proposed building would meet their needs well into the future.

## **Building Cost Estimate**

Mr. Graham stated that the Committee had looked at various cost-saving options, such as the upper area would not be completed immediately. However, it was determined that overall this strategy would not be cost-effective. Commissioner Tester asked if possibly installing some modular walls had been studied. Mr. Graham stated that it had been discussed, but felt it was not a financially wise option.

Commissioner Tester inquired if Watauga County had been reviewed as a "whole" regarding growth and how it would impact the level of service given. He felt they should not look at the Blowing Rock area, but the entire county.

Mr. Graham stated that basically the fire district would remain the same with the exception of the 5-mile radius changing to 6-miles. He said a lot of research had been done and he felt this was a win/win situation to have a centrally located facility on the proposed site. He felt the level of service given would not be as good if the area services were spread out, and with this site it would be able to house another unit, such as a county paramedic unit.

Town Manager Hildebran stated that manpower was one of the biggest concerns for the future, because volunteerism was going down as a whole nationally, not just in the Blowing Rock area.

Mr. Graham stated the department in the past year, received approximately 600 calls, with the number of active calls growing due to the increase of people to the area.

Mr. Garner stated the outside of the building consisted of brick, shingles and stone. The intent was to create a building that looked like it had been on the property for a period of time and fit the site comfortably.

Mayor Lawrence asked if any landscaping would be between the building and the 321-By-pass. Mr. Garner stated that due to the positioning of the building on the site, there would be room for a small amount of landscaping only.

### **Site Issues**

Mr. Shad Walters of McGill Associates stated that Mr. Garner had covered the project very well, but he would be glad to answer any questions Council might have concerning the proposed site.

He stated the building could not be built in the 100-year flood plain. Mr. Walters advised Council that according to Western Carolina Surveyors the flood map was incorrect. Mr. Walters felt with a minor amendment, possibly the flood line could be reduced. According to Mr. Walters it would take approximately three to four months to receive the information needed from FEMA.

Mr. Walden also briefly discussed the excavation process for the project and according to the kind of rock found on the site, it could be costly.

### **Project Costs**

Town Manager Hildebran spoke regarding the cost of the proposed project. He stated that the estimated cost of the project was approximately 5.5 million dollars. Of that total, \$4,500,000 would be building and site costs and \$1,000,000 would be land, architecture, and engineer costs. Of the \$4.5 million, \$2.2 million had been USDA approved for 40 years at 4.25 percent interest. He stated that \$2.3 million was still needed and various banks had been approached regarding financing options.

Mr. Hildebran advised the service area was made up of Watauga County at 38.9 percent, Caldwell County was 7.4 percent and the Town at 53.7 percent. Mr. Hildebran also stated that a tax increase of 3 cents per one hundred dollars valuation was needed to cover the debt service on the total loan amount. Mr. Hildebran advised that the Rural Watauga Fire District Board would be approached for a commitment from the fire tax revenue collected from the Watauga County District of \$75,000 for a two year period, followed by a \$50,000 allocation over a twenty-year period. He also stated that the North Caldwell District would be asked for an allocation of \$200,000 over a 20-year period.

Mr. Hildebran advised he felt that construction could possibly start in the early summer of 2006, with the CUP process to begin possibly in January.

Commissioner Tester stated he felt the proposed project was of utmost importance, and made a motion to move forward with the project as outlined, seconded by Commissioner Wiseman. Unanimously approved.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**J.B. Lawrence**

**Attest:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sharon H. Greene, Town Clerk**