

MINUTES

2007 COUNCIL RETREAT

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session on Monday, January 15, 2007 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 Tommy Klutz. Also present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Clerk Sharon Greene and Finance Officer Margaret Pierce. At 6:30 p.m., Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting for the evening. On Tuesday, January 16, 2007, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

(Note: McGill Associates Representatives Andy Lovingood, Joel Whitford and Doug Chapman were also in attendance on Monday, January 15 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.)

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a retreat to discuss key issues, initiatives and long-term planning. An issue-based process was used to help update the Town's FY 2007-08 goals and initiatives. The following major issues and topics were discussed during the sessions and the action plan below resulted:

2007 – RETREAT PRIORITIES & ACTION PLAN

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 (*Appointments Effective March 1, 2007 meeting*)**

- Jim Steele, reappoint to a three-year term ending 2010
- Doug Drury, appoint to a three-year term ending 2010
- Ada Webster, appoint to a three-year term ending 2010

- **Board of Adjustment (*Appointments Effective March 1, 2007 meeting*)**

- Mark Klein, reappoint to a three-year term ending 2010
- Annie Whatley, reappoint to a three-year term ending 2010
- David Harwood, appoint to a three-year term ending 2010 (Alternate)
- Tim Ford, appoint to unexpired term ending 2009 (Alternate)

- **ABC Board (*Appointment Effective July 1, 2007*)**

- Robert Miller, reappoint to a three-year term ending in 2010 (Chairperson)

- **TDA Board (*Appointment Effective March 1, 2007*)**

- Kent Tarbutton, reappoint to a three-year term ending 2010 (Lodging)

- Bernie Keele, reappoint to a three-year term ending 2010 (Business/Tourism Related) (1-year appointment as Chairperson)

No action was taken on these proposed appointments, pending contact with these citizens and final action to be made at the February 13, 2007 Council meeting.

Administration

- Consider Town Hall Building Window Replacement during this FY
- Consider Computer Hardware/Software Upgrades in FY 2007-08 budget process
- Continue to study the Cleaning/Janitorial part-time position

Budgetary

- Place Retirement/Longevity Bonus Policy revisions on February agenda for consideration
 - Proceed with Employee Handbook Update and place on future Council agenda for consideration
 - Continue to monitor competitiveness of salaries and consider during FY 2007-08 budget process
 - Continue to monitor health insurance costs for retirees and consider a 15-year length of service minimum for retirement insurance coverage
 - Continue to produce bi-monthly newsletter and place copies at post office
 - Continue TDA set aside of 1/3 of monies for Town infrastructure
 - Continue to maintain and fund Debt Service Schedule
 - Continue to maintain and fund Fleet Capital Replacement Schedule
 - Continue to monitor utility rates during Water/Sewer Capital Improvement Plan implementation to insure sufficiency
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- Forward 2006 Town Accomplishments List to newspapers

Planning Issues

- **Consider flexibility with 5-units per acre residential density standard in Central Business District, but maintain current height, setback, parking and open space requirements**
- **Consider allowing totally submerged parking in Central Business District without counting toward 40' maximum height limit – but mandate performance bond and prohibit appeals to BOA due to difficulty of construction**
- **Proceed with annexation process of The Rock/Gideon Ridge area (note: seek zoning to insure viability of (2) significant tourism properties, but provides protection in the event of sale of property)**
- **Proceed with condemnations of dilapidated commercial structures**
- **Begin discussions with the property owners of dilapidated residential structures Continue with Landscape/Tree Ordinance revisions and consider at March 2007 meeting**
- **Continue to review and maintain Town Comprehensive Plan Discuss Building Permit Fee Schedule modification at upcoming Council/Planning Department annual meeting (consider modest water heater/furnace changeout fees)**
- **Proceed with CUP Tracking Database Software (include landscaping component & parking lot maintenance) Use Fire Inspector to assist in CUP compliance Monitor impacts of U.S. 321 Widening Project (work tourism partners) Continue with GIS (Geographic Information System) Layer Development Maintain current Short-term Rental Policy**
- **Proceed with Town Land Use Code Review (use outside assistance)**
- **Review Downtown Parking Requirements/Parking Study (including handicap spaces)**
- **Review Outside Dining Regulations/Outside Display of Merchandise (thorough review to consider the concerns of the various parties)**
- **Check on status of Napier Building Follow-up on inventory of historic buildings in CB**

Parks & Recreation/Town Beautification Issues

- Continued P&R Master Plan implementation
- Consider Part-time position upgrade to Full-time in 2007-08 budget process
- Continue dialogue with American Legion & Ruritan Club on buildings
- Continue to work with BRAAC on overall beautification of Town
- Pursue PARTF Grant for Swimming Pool Modernization (& Restrooms)

- Consider naming opportunities (i.e., bricks) for pool improvement project
- Work with Watauga County on Davant Field maintenance/improvements

Public Safety Issues (Police/Emergency Services)

Emergency Services

- Continue construction oversight of new Emergency Services Building project
- Continue negotiations regarding Medic Base co-location
- Continue with House Numbering Program & Pre-Fire Planning Projects

Police

- Consider Part-time telecommunicator position upgrade to Full-time in FY 2007-08 budget process (inc. administrative support)
- Consider Equipment Upgrades in FY 2007-08 budget process
- Fund architectural study of old fire/rescue building for future use (Police, Recreation & PW)
- Place ABC contribution of \$75,000 into Building Renovation Capital Reserve

Infrastructure Issues (Public Works/Water/Wastewater)

Public Works

- Continue Street Pavement Plan implementation
- Maintain current Brush Pick-up Policy
- Consider Equipment Replacement in FY 2007-08 budget process
- Pursue acquisition of land adjoining PW Warehouse
- Consider PW storage space in old fire/rescue building
- Allocate \$15,000 toward sidewalk surveying/feasibility of Ransom Street (Henkel Street to Sunset Drive) and Morris Street/Chestnut Street.
- Investigate feasibility of sidewalk from downtown to Bass Lake

- Complete storm water study and consider McGill engineering recommendations
- Complete downtown streetscape plan and consider McGill engineering recommendations (underground utilities, sidewalks, tree planting, etc.)
- Place BREMCO franchise fee reimbursement of \$67,812 into sidewalk capital reserve
- Complete plans for 1-level parking structure adjacent to American Legion Building
- Obtain update on Blowing Rock Art and History Museum parking structure design (may consider a 1-level parking structure in lieu of 2-level at this time)
- Explore partnership options in the provision of parking (school, churches, shuttle-satellite, Art in the Park vendor-satellite, etc.)
- Place parking in-lieu fee increase to \$15,000 per space on February Council Agenda
- Investigate drainage ditch improvement on Ransom Street

Water/Sewer

- Continue with Water/Sewer Capital Improvements Plan implementation & prepare financing package
- Schedule Laurel Park neighborhood meeting to discuss and receive feedback on sewer extension via pressure system option
- Inform Quail Hollow Drive development representative of easement options and possible feasibility of pressure system
- Continue to pursue water supply and land exchange with U.S. Park Service for Town Reservoir property

Tourism Issues:

- Investigate feasibility of Ice House building for possible use as public restroom and visitor information areaRequest Chamber of Commerce to provide details of events – related to use of town facilities, town services and/or use of public streets
- Proceed with Master Signage Plan – Phase III & IV
- Place Edgewood Cottage Preservation Project on February Agenda for discussion
- Schedule annual meeting with TDA to review Annual Report (February)
- Schedule joint meeting with TDA/Chamber in late winter to discuss issues of common interest

Other:

- Monitor property that comes available that may have a strategic benefit to town ownership
- Continue to work with BREMCO on future substation and underground transmission line
- Acquire naming rights policies from other government jurisdictions for Council review
- Pursue demonstration of Big Belly Trash Receptacle Compactor from vendor (locations -Memorial Park and near Kilwin's)
- Follow-up on merchant placement of trash for pick-up on Main Street during weekends
- Provide response to Horne Letter
- General Brainstorming – Future Threats to Blowing Rock
 - Influence of outside groups
 - Inadequate funding to meet infrastructure demands
 - Overprice of commercial rental space
 - Lack of maintenance/preservation of the “Blowing Rock Vision” or Comprehensive Plan
 - Pressure from well-financed external developers
 - Lack of citizen public service participation on appointed boards and commissions
 - Loss of small-town charm
- Schedule a town visioning worksession similar to Town Center sessions held in 2003 on the future of Blowing Rock.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

MAYOR _____

J.B. Lawrence

Attest: _____

Sharon Greene, Town Clerk