

MINUTES

Town of Blowing Rock

Board of Commissioners

Special Meeting-February 26, 2007

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Monday, February 26, 2007. Attending were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Rita Wiseman, Keith Tester, Terry Lentz and Tommy Klutz. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

Call to Order

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

First item discussed, was the endorsement of the following names to serve on the Blowing Rock Rescue Squad Board of Directors: J.B. Lawrence, Craig Sullivan, Kent Graham, and Jim Ratchford. The rescue squad by-laws require several civic organizations to vote on their Board of Directors one of which is the Blowing Rock Town Council. A motion was given by Commissioner Tester, seconded by Commissioner Ball to nominate the J.B. Lawrence, Craig Sullivan, Kent Graham and Jim Ratchford as members of the Board of Directors for the Blowing Rock Rescue Squad. Unanimously approved.

Parks & Recreation Issues

Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown met with Council to discuss the following Parks & Recreation/Town Beautification Issues and to discuss her department's action plan with regard to these issues. She also updated them on her department accomplishments for 2006.

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

Mrs. Brown gave Council a list of several accomplishments that her department had achieved such as; the Memorial Park Playground had been updated to ADA accessible with the installation of ramps, repairs to the Grover Robbins Pool had been made to get it ready for the upcoming season, the tennis courts had been resurfaced, etc. She also spoke of several programs that were offered through her department and their success.

Also discussed was the 2005 Parks & Recreation Master Plan items such as applying for the Parks & Recreation Trust Fund Grant for the new pool complex that was planned, information kiosks in several areas, hardscape land improvements to Memorial Park, etc.

Commissioner Tester inquired if TDA funds could be designated towards the planned kiosks. Town Manager Hildebran stated that he felt it could.

Mrs. Brown also stated that she would like to have her part-time maintenance position upgraded to a full-time position. She stated that the position was a great asset to her department and was capable of helping in several areas which freed up her other employees so they could concentrate more in their area of expertise.

The American Legion and Ruritan buildings were briefly discussed as well as Glen Burney Trail signs and plans for adding more flowerbeds in Memorial Park. Mrs. Brown also suggested that a sign directing people to the Grover Robbins Pool was needed on Hwy 221.

Davant Field was also discussed with Mrs. Brown stating that quite a bit of work was needed in that particular area. She stated the field needed to be resurfaced, fencing needed replacing, etc. She also said that Watauga County Parks & Recreation planned to pay for the fence replacement and resurfacing the field, if the town agreed to replacing the drainage pipes and maintaining the field, due to their lack of staff. She stated that Watauga County would mow the field and give the town the equipment to drag the field. A roof over the dugout was also planned.

Mrs. Brown updated Council on items of concern at the Annie Cannon Memorial Park and what was being done to remedy the problems. She began by saying with the aid of grant money received the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission (BRAAC) and employees of the Town were able to complete proposed improvements at Annie Cannon Memorial Park. Stone edging to better define the gardens and paths, log benches added throughout the park plus new plantings, etc. were some of the improvements mentioned.

Next item discussed was the Day Camp Program, with Mrs. Brown stating she had checked with other programs like this one in the surrounding areas and the Town's program was essentially equal to the others, except Blowing Rock's Day Camp Program offered better field trips and the price for these trip might need to be adjusted accordingly. Mrs. Brown also stated that the Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Amy Flieg was now in charge of the Day Camp Program which left more funds to upgrade her maintenance position to full-time.

Commissioner Wiseman commented on how pleased she was with the garden areas being kept so nicely.

Commissioner Klutz asked if the "kiddy pool" could be reopened and if not, could it be filled in to accommodate for more seating area. Mrs. Brown stated the chemicals could not be regulated in the "kiddy pool" area and that it was not heated. Town Manager Hildebran stated that the Town could look into filling this area, but felt it would be more expensive when it had to be torn out during the construction of the new complex.

Commissioner Lentz stated he would like to see more lighting added to the pool area in the new design process so it could be opened longer in the evenings. Town Hildebran stated this would be looked into.

Commissioner Wiseman commended Mrs. Brown on what a good job her department was doing.

Public Safety Issues (Police/Emergency Services)

Council met with Police Chief Eric Brown to discuss the 2006 accomplishments of his department as well as the following Retreat Priorities:

- 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

Police Department

Chief Brown updated Council on several programs that his department was involved in such as; the D.A.R.E Program which taught area youth about the consequences of drug use, a program working with area merchants to help alleviate shop lifting, the annual Christmas program that helped provide coats and shoes to children in need, the elderly welfare program which consisted of his department calling and checking on elderly persons in the area, and also the responsible alcohol seller program.

Chief Brown stated he had received grant funding for a new radar trailer which would be helpful in remedying speeding problems in certain areas of town.

Commissioner Wiseman commented that merchants would like for the officers to walk through their stores more frequently. Chief Brown stated he would look into her request. He spoke of a program his department was working on with regard to shoplifting problems that he felt would be most useful.

Commissioner Tester inquired as to why the chart showing miles driven by patrol cars had decreased in the months of October, November, and December. Chief Brown stated that his department had two less officers during this period and that gas prices had also attributed to lesser miles driven.

The need of a webcam for the Woodlawn Cemetery was also discussed, as well as the need for digital cameras in the patrol cars. Chief Brown stated originally he had thought a mass replacement of VHS cameras with digital cameras in the vehicles would be needed in the near future, but after speaking with a representative regarding VHS cameras, this would not be needed and could be programmed over a period of time. Commissioner Klutz stated he would like to see all replacement of cameras in the police vehicles. Commissioners Lentz and Wiseman stated they felt it was not necessary to replace all at one time, but replace the VHS cameras with digital video cameras in accordance with our fleet replacement program. Also, Chief Brown discussed the need for small digital cameras for officers. Council encouraged staff to proceed with this purchase if budget allowed.

Chief Brown also discussed another goal for his department, implementing a bike patrol for the Main Street area and Shoppes on the Parkway. He felt during the peak busy times, officers would be faster at getting to the problem if they were on a bike. He also stated that he had checked prices for the type bike that would be needed and had found the price to be approximately \$800.00. Town Manager Hildebran suggested that they purchase one bike or look for a donation of a bike to see how well the bike patrol worked. Mayor Lawrence felt this was a good idea.

Commissioner Wiseman asked if Chief Brown felt the pay scale was competitive with other departments in the area. Chief Brown commented the pay scale needed to be increased in order to keep officers from leaving.

Updating and the expansion of the police department, once the new fire/rescue building was finished was also discussed briefly, stating that extra funding from the ABC Store (at their request), had been designated to the Police Department and would be used toward architectural needs.

Emergency Services

Council met with Emergency Services Director Kent Graham to discuss the following issues for his department:

- 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

EMS Director Graham began by commenting that his department had the best group of people anywhere with regard to the type work they do. He also stated his department was very excited about the anticipated opening of their new building and how pleased he was with the progress that was being made. Also discussed, was a medic base in the Blowing Rock area with Mr. Graham stating Blowing Rock had the call volume to warrant a medic base facility in this area.

He also touched upon the house numbering program, stating that Aaron Miller was currently working on this in conjunction with Elaine Griffith at Watauga County. Mr. Graham felt that a direct mailing to civic organizations, real estate companies and residents would be helpful with gathering information for the house numbering process.

Mr. Graham stated he would eventually like to see at least 75 people on the volunteer roster when they got into their new facility. He also spoke of plans for a substation to be built approximately 6 miles from town on the Hwy. 221. He stated that land had been donated and some private money had been promised towards this project.

Adjournment

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Mayor _____

J.B. Lawrence

Attest: _____

Sharon Greene, Town Clerk