

# MINUTES

## Town of Blowing Rock Intergovernmental Retreat

May 24, 2007

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners attended an Intergovernmental Retreat hosted by the Town of Boone on May 24, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. The meeting was held at Chetola Resort in Blowing Rock. In attendance were:

**Blowing Rock Council Members:** Mayor Pro-tem Terry Lentz, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Keith Tester, Rita Wiseman, Tommy Klutz

**Blowing Rock Town Staff:** Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Clerk Sharon Greene, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock

**Boone Council Members:** Mayor Loretta Clawson, Commissioners Lynne Mason, Bunk Spann, Dempsey Wilcox, Janet Pepin

**Boone Town Staff:** Town Manager Greg Young, Deputy Town Clerk Kim Tester, Utilities Director Rick Miller, Development Services Director John Spear, Public Works Director Blake Brown, Police Captain Curtis Main, Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele

**Seven Devils Council Members:** Mayor Bob Dodson, Commissioners Richard DeMott, Kathy Copley

**Watauga County Board of Commissioners:** Chairman Jim Deal, Members Billy Ralph Winkler, John Cooper, Mary Moretz, Winston Kinsey

**Watauga County Staff:** County Manager Rocky Nelson, Assistant County Manager Deron Geouque, Clerk to the Board Anita Fogle, Planning Director Joe Furman

**Appalachian State University:** Chancellor Ken Peacock, Dr. Loren Baumhover

**Facilitator:** Dr. Garry Cooper, Christy DeStefano

## **Call to Order**

Mayor Loretta Clawson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance then turned the floor over to Council member Lynne Mason. Council member Mason stressed the need for cooperation among all entities present. Ms. Mason stated this was a critical time for the High Country and the decisions being made at the present time would greatly impact future generations. Ms. Mason stated her goal was to leave the retreat with an action plan to work through major issues that affected the entire region. Ms. Mason asked Dr. Cooper to begin the facilitation.

Dr. Cooper began with posting the following two-part focus question to those present:

- What issues of common concern for opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in addressing ways to accommodate regional growth and change over the next six to twelve months, and what should we do about these issues?

Dr. Cooper asked all attendees to introduce themselves and share their issues of concern.

Dr. Cooper listed the following meeting guidelines: 1) Everyone should hear and be heard, 2) there are no wrong answers, 3) everyone has wisdom, 4) the use of wisdom results in the wisest outcome, 5) there are creative ways to solve issues. The items of concern were as follows:

1. **Zero Waste:** Chairman Deal stated this issue encompassed both environmental and economic impacts. Council Member Mason voiced her concerns regarding the county landfill and stated that a joint endeavor was needed to resolve the problem. County Manager Rocky

Nelson agreed that all entities needed to take action to deal with this issue. Composting was mentioned as a way to save in the cost of fuel used to transport waste to other facilities.

2. **Public Transportation:** Mayor Clawson stressed the need for people to use the Appalcart system as a way to reduce traffic. Council Member Mason mentioned alternative means of transportation such as greenways, etc. Council Member Pepin stated this issue affected parking as well.
3. **Water and Sewer:** Pollution of our rivers and streams in the area were discussed. Chairman Deal stated water and sewer was a critical issue and how it also affected the affordable housing market. Council Member Spann advised the Town of Boone was seeking an interconnection agreement for water.
4. **Greenways/Recreational Opportunities:** Chairman Deal conveyed that he felt there was a strong interest for an interconnected trail that eventually extended from mountains to the sea and how this issue affected tourism.
5. **Preservation of Our Heritage:** Mayor Clawson expressed her concerns with the preservation of the local history as well as historical sites within the County. Council Member Pepin stated the Boone Historical Commissioner's main priority at the present time was an inventory of historic sites in the area.
6. **Regional Healthcare:** Commissioner Tester spoke of the following challenges for healthcare: small community hospitals vs. regional healthcare systems, rising health care costs, and rapid growth of the area. Commissioner Moretz voiced the need for more community care clinics to treat the needy.
7. **Alternative/Saving Energy Opportunities:** Mayor Clawson stated the Town of Boone had experimented with the use of biodiesel fuel in town trucks and equipment. Commissioner Kinsey stated ways to save traditional energy sources needed developing. Council Member Pepin suggested that ASU could help tremendously in the development of energy-saving industry in the region. Chancellor Peacock stated that ASU was moving toward a more sustainable development with their campus.
8. **DOT Proposal/Highway 421:** Several present felt this was a major priority and that all entities needed to focus on ensuring that details such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and landscaped medians were part of the project's plan.

9. **Environmental and View Shed protection:** Mayor Clawson conveyed that the Town of Boone had recently imposed a moratorium on steep-slope development as well as creating new regulations with regard to this issue.
10. **Affordable Housing:** Chairman Deal inquired as to how local governments could deal with all of these issues and create and maintain affordable housing.
11. **Consolidation of Communication Services:** County Manager Rocky Nelson conveyed that Watauga County Emergency Management Services Committee had recommended the consolidation of three current dispatch centers into one emergency communications center, stating this would provide better service to citizens as well as save money. Commissioner Kinsey felt that fire protection and safety issues also needed to be further discussed.
12. **Economic Development and Tourism:** It was consensus of those present that this item had been discussed during the discussion of previous issues.
13. **Smart Growth:** Council Member Spann suggested smart growth principles such as those used in Davidson, NC could possibly apply county-wide. Council Member Mason stated the Town of Boone was planning a smart growth audit on Town buildings in the summer. County Manager Nelson thought smart growth principals could be used during the construction of the new high school.
14. **Boone By-Pass:** Commissioner Cooper stated the need of a Boone by-pass was growing daily and costs were increasing as the project was delayed.
15. **University Growth:** Chairman Deal stated the key issues are where and how the university grows.

It was consensus of the group that the following issues were time-sensitive: DOT/Highway 421 project, public education, and university growth. Dr. Cooper pointed out that several of the issues that were listed closely related to others. The catalytic issues were the following: water/sewer, university growth, economic development, affordable housing, and the Highway 421 Project. Dr. Cooper asked everyone to prioritize the list according to what they felt was most important. Most everyone agreed that university growth, water/sewer issues, and public education were the most

urgent; although alternative energy, consolidation of a communication center as well as preserving the area heritage were very important also.

The final step in the process according to Dr. Cooper was to decide what needed to be done and create an action plan. After a brief discussion, the group decided more time was needed to further discuss the issues and create an action plan for the two most important issues of public education and the Highway 421 Project. All members present decided to meet on Thursday, June 7, 2007, from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. at the Watauga County Administration Building in the Commissioner's Boardroom to discuss these items further.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Ball, seconded by Commissioner Wiseman, the Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners moved to enter into a joint closed session at 8:02 p.m. with Town of Boone Board of Commissioners and Watauga County Board of Commissioners to discuss economic development pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11a)(4). Unanimously approved.

A motion to exit the closed session meeting and resume the open meeting at 8:50 p.m. was made by Commissioner Wiseman seconded by Commissioner Tester. Unanimously approved.

### **Adjournment**

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

**Mayor Pro-tem**\_\_\_\_\_

**Terry Lentz**

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

**Sharon Greene, Town Clerk**

