

MINUTES

Town of Blowing Rock

Board of Commissioners

Special Meeting-August 7, 2007

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Tuesday, August 7, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at Town Hall. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Keith Tester, Terry Lentz, Rita Wiseman and Tommy Klutz. Others attending were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Public Works Director Johnny Lentz, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

ENGINEERING PROJECTS UPDATE

Doug Chapman of McGill Associates presented a packet of information and gave a power-point presentation updating Council on various engineering projects.

1) Storm Water Master Plan

Mr. Chapman stated the stormwater system was a key component to the Town's infrastructure and the element of Town facilities includes collection and conveyance structures as well as any quantity and quality control facilities. He said that until recent years, stormwater has been overlooked in many municipalities. He also advised that Blowing Rock had proactively entered into a study of this infrastructure, and as part of that study, the following items are key considerations in development of a Stormwater Master Plan.

- Continued growth and development in Blowing Rock
- Water quality and stream protection
- Collection of stormwater
- Ordinance needs for continued success

Mr. Chapman gave a hydrological assessment which is used to evaluate predicted stormwater runoff flows from specified drainage areas. He stated the New River was the largest river basin in the Blowing Rock area and efforts were focused on the MFK/SFK which has two major drainage areas: 1) Central Business District and 2) Residential areas surrounding the Country Club.

Mr. Chapman advised a hydraulic analysis was also conducted that utilizes runoff predictions developed from hydrology calculations to determine suitability of the existing conveyance system.

He also advised there was a noticeable improvement in the run-off collection system in the past couple years due to inlet collection improvement and additional piping, but there was still a need for additional inlet collections improvement, as well as additional piping and upgrading of undersized piping.

An ordinance evaluation was also discussed, with Mr. Chapman stating the current ordinance requires detention for increases in impervious area through ponds or underground systems. Pre-existing impervious areas are exempt from the requirement of detention as well as construction of single-family residences.

Mr. Chapman stated that there were no existing water quality control requirements and no requirements related to steep slopes.

The following recommendations were given for infrastructure improvements:

- Development of drainage system inlet upgrade program
- Installation of additional piping in Central Business District
- Upgrade undersized piping in Central Business District
- Development of improvement program for the Laurel Park area

The following recommendations for water quality improvements were also discussed:

- Seeking FEMA funding for purchasing flood prone properties
- Seeking CWMTF funding for purchasing buffers along MFK/SFK of the New River to reestablish vegetative buffers and constructing structural stormwater treatment devices for drainage for key parking areas in the Central Business District

Mr. Chapman stated the Town could develop a drainage system inlet upgrade program on a case by case basis. He also advised that a CIP would be developed to spread improvements over a length of time.

Commissioner Tester stated that problems developed faster than the town could fix them and a proactive plan should be developed showing projects and the estimated costs. Mr. Tester did not feel the town should react only when they see a problem, but should assess potential problems and develop a plan and prioritize the problems.

Mr. Chapman stated it would be more difficult to work through residential areas for various reasons dealing with stormwater issues. Commissioner Klutz felt the Central Business District was just as important as the Residential Districts and the town should find a way to pay for improvements.

Commissioner Wiseman stated there were several residential areas that were in need of improvements. Mr. Chapman stated that Laurel Park was one of the worst areas because of the narrowness of the streets and the steep slope. Planning Director Rothrock also stated the overall length and density of the slope was a contributing factor.

Mr. Chapman stated it would be a challenge to look at everything that is needed and see if the funding would work. Commissioner Tester stated in order to fix all the storm water problems in town it would be extremely expensive, but he would like to see a scaled down plan with estimated costs and move forward with some of the things that are needed. It was consensus of Council to move forward with a long range plan with cost amounts for stormwater improvements.

Commissioner Tester inquired about federal regulations regarding stormwater and if there were new regulations that were not being met. Mr. Chapman stated there were new regulations, but at the present time, Watauga County and jurisdictions therein were not subject to the federal requirements.

Mr. Chapman gave the following recommendations for ordinance revisions for consideration: eliminate "Grandfathering" of existing impervious areas from detention requirements, adjust detention requirements to relate post-development flows to pre-development levels require detention/retention for newly constructed single-family residences, implement NCDWQ water quality requirements for high density development and require control of runoff with BMP's on site with slopes greater than 30%.

Commissioner Tester asked what direction the Town should go in reference to these changes and improvements. Mr. Chapman advised that a spreadsheet outlining special improvements and costs would be drafted and given to Council possibly in September.

Public Works Director Lentz stated that some things could be done in-house. Town Manager Hildebran stated that each year during the budget process, money was set aside in anticipation of CIP improvements that were planned.

Mr. Chapman gave recommendations for establishing stormwater utility by developing user fees based on land use and/or impervious area, provide funding for systematic capital improvements, dedicated staff to address maintenance issues and making it a division of the Public Works Department.

Commissioner Tester suggested that McGill Associates focus on the big picture and provide Council with information to make a decision.

Mr. Chapman also stated the following funding strategies could be used: federal FEMA grants, CWMTF grants, town funds, utility fees and charges and developers.

Commissioner Klutz agreed that a long-range plan was needed, such as applying for grant monies, but he did not think developers should have to pay for things the town needed.

Commissioner Lentz felt the Town should “go slow” with residential requirements, as he felt it would be difficult to implement and fund them.

Streetscape Master Plan

Mr. Chapman declared that Blowing Rock had one of the best “Main Streets” in North Carolina and the goal for the streetscape plan was not to overhaul Main Street, but to transform something good, into something great, while maintaining the character and village feel of Blowing Rock.

Mr. Chapman read the following: “Mission Statement: To maintain the quality, character, and economic vitality of the Town Center through appropriate land use controls, parking improvements, sidewalk improvements, landscaping improvements, and park improvements.”

Mr. Chapman also read the following: “Action Statement: Develop a master improvement plan for Main Street and Sunset Drive. The plan should include reconstructed sidewalks, underground utilities, additional street trees, enhanced landscaping, and other “streetscape” improvements. Redundant or

excessive signs, trash cans, benches, and other street "clutter" should be eliminated as part of the improvement plan."

Key considerations were: viewshed, overhead utilities, traffic signalization at Sunset Street, sidewalks/utility strip, curb conditions, drainage near Town Hall, street trees/landscaping and parking. Mr. Chapman stated there was a variety of sidewalks downtown and some were in need of replacement. He also stated that the variety of materials used downtown added to the "flavor" of Main Street. Commissioner Tester stated he did not have a problem with the variety of materials and everything should not look the same, however the problem areas should be fixed.

Overhead utilities were discussed with Mr. Chapman stating that Main Street was lined with overhead utilities, such as electric, telephone, cable and NCDOT traffic signals. Commissioner Klutz felt that an underground tunnel should be put down Main Street since it was only a quarter-mile long. A utility strip for the downtown area was also discussed. Mr. Chapman advised that Main Street was a U.S. highway and the state would need to be involved in any changes that were done to this area. Commissioner Klutz inquired how hard it would be to obtain Main Street from the state. He also stated that installation of underground utilities in his opinion would be the single most attractive thing that could be done for Main Street.

Sidewalks and curbing were also discussed briefly as well as street trees and landscaping. Mr. Chapman showed various places where trees could be planted along Main Street. Commissioner Lentz asked if N.C.D.O.T would be receptive of the tree planting along the curbs, and he felt this would cause visibility problems. He advised the reason there were no trees on the East side of Main Street because of large trucks such as UPS/campers hitting the limbs of trees, and the salting of the road during the winter. Commissioner Lentz stated historically there used to be larger lots and some single-family residences on Main Street, and the street was also a dirt road which made it easier to grow trees.

Commissioner Tester felt a plan should be implemented that would make Blowing Rock have better "walkability" while maintaining the Town's uniqueness. Commissioner Ball felt that underground utilities would be a great change for downtown, but the expense would be great.

Mayor Lawrence felt it would be unfair for all Blue Ridge members to subsidize what it would cost for underground utilities in town. Town Manager Hildebran felt that N.C.D.O.T would participate some with regards to mast arm installation on Main Street for signal lights since the area was congested and a safety issue. Commissioner Klutz reiterated his belief that all utilities should be underground on Main Street.

It was Council consensus to move forward with a phased approach and also look at street trees with some loss of parking.

Sidewalk Projects

Sidewalks along Ransom Street, Morris Street and Chestnut Street were discussed next. Mr. Chapman stated that field surveys were complete but there were some drainage issues and acquisition of property would be needed for easements along Ransom Street. He also stated the town could seek funding from N.C.D.O.T. from the Safe Routes to School Program for sidewalks along Morris Street.

Several issues with traffic congestion at Blowing Rock School were discussed. Several members of Council felt that a better system should be in place for dropping off and picking up school children.

Council felt that a meeting with school officials would be beneficial and a letter should be drafted addressing these issues. A motion was given by Commissioner Wiseman, seconded by Commissioner Ball to schedule a meeting with school officials to discuss rerouting school traffic. Unanimously approved.

American Legion Parking Deck

Mr. Chapman stated the geotechnical investigations were complete and an architect and structural engineer had been selected for this project. He advised there were preparations being made to obtain a conditional use permit that would go before the Planning Board in September, and presented to Council in October. Mr. Chapman stated if everything went as planned, foundation work would begin in the fall and the project would hopefully be completed in the spring of 2008. Town Manager Hildebran presented Council with an engineering services contract between the Town and McGill Associates for the American Legion Parking Deck Project for their review. Commissioner Wiseman made a motion to accept the agreement for engineering services for \$105,500.00 as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ball. Unanimously approved. **American Legion Parking Deck Project Agreement – Exhibit A**

Water and Sewer CIP

Mr. Chapman presented the following improvements to the water plant and wastewater plant that were needed:

- Water Plant Improvements
 - Waste pumping station and piping
 - Basement sump pump
 - Fence/piping/general improvements

- Wastewater Plant Improvements
 - Mechanical bar screen
 - Conversion of digester to additional flow equalization
 - Construct larger sludge digester
 - Improve sludge withdrawal from clarifiers
 - Improvements to the flow diversion structure
- Infiltration/Inflow
 - Identify problems
 - Repair problems
- Sewer line extensions

Mr. Chapman stated the design for the Water/Wastewater Treatment Plants was almost completed. He advised that the wastewater treatment plant required more improvements than the water plant. He also advised that the design would be submitted to the State next week for review and he expected approval of the plans in the next 60-90 days. After that, the project would be bid out and construction could begin later in the year.

He briefly reviewed the Water/Sewer CIP showing estimated costs for the improvements.

Other

Town Manager Hildebran stated that Mr. Lowell Thomas had requested that the Town consider naming the gardens along the historic trail on South Main Street "The Legacy Gardens". A motion was made by Commissioner Lentz, seconded by Commissioner Tester to name the gardens as requested "The Legacy Gardens". Unanimously approved.

Town Manager Hildebran advised that he was still seeking additional funds for the Grover Robbins Pool renovations.

Commissioner Klutz inquired if the work at Davant Field was going to be done and if the new fencing was going to be installed in the near future. Mr. Hildebran stated the work was scheduled to be done soon.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor _____

J.B. Lawrence

Attest: _____

Sharon Greene, Town Clerk

Attachments

American Legion Parking Deck Agreement – Exhibit A