

**MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
February 14, 2017**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock, N.C. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Mayor Pro-tem Albert Yount and Council Members Jim Steele, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson and Ray Pickett. Others in attendance were Town Manager Ed Evans, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Public Works and Utilities Director Mike Wilcox, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Police Chief Tony Jones, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Council Member Sweeting made a motion for the adoption of the agenda, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular and closed session meetings held on January 10, 2017 and for Council Retreat minutes held on January 15-17 and closed session minutes held on January 16, 2017 with the following correction: on page 10 of the retreat minutes change that the meeting reconvened at 8 a.m. instead of 8 p.m., seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND REPORTS

Highway 321 Valley Boulevard Construction Update

Kipp Turner of Maymead Construction began his monthly update by stating paving has continued at the lower end of the project as well as just south of Blowing Rock just below the Blowing Rock sign. Mr. Turner advised additional paving is scheduled in the near future weather permitting.

Mr. Turner stated the six (6) inch waterline work will begin down the mountain at Blackberry Condos and will work their way back up the mountain to The Rock Road. Mr. Turner advised this work will involve a flagging operation and pilot car, traffic impact and delays will be expected. Mr. Turner further advised work will be every day on this project weather permitting.

Mr. Turner stated duct bank work has finished up in the Norwood Circle area and duct bank work has moved to the Country Club Drive area. Mr. Turner further stated work has progressed along the Golf Course and some paving is expected in the near future.

Mayor Lawrence asked Mr. Turner if the road completion is still on track to be completed later this year. Mr. Turner stated that it was and it must be completed by the end of this year.

Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Turner for his update.

CONSENT AGENDA

Town Manager Ed Evans presented the following consent agenda items:

1. Budget Amendment Ordinance

Budget Amendment Ordinance to account for various items.

2. Tax Releases

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for releases (adjustments) and refunds. Three (3) tax releases totaling \$1,795.52 have been identified for Council approval.

3. Advertise 2016 Past Due Taxes

Real property tax billed of the 2016 tax year (fiscal year 2016-2017) totaled \$3,756,938.53. Through February 7, 2017, \$3,500,227.57 or 93% has been collected. Consistent with NC General Statute 105-369, and following Council approval, staff will send an individual letter to each property owner and allow at least 30 days for payment prior to publishing the list of real property owners and amounts still unpaid as of that date (projected to be April 20, 2017).

4. Surplus Equipment (Resolution #2017-02)

Three items have been identified as surplus; a street sweeper, fire siren and monitor kerosene heater.

5. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Applicants to fill positions coming up for renewal on the Town of Blowing Rock Boards and Commissions have been reviewed by Town Council for consideration and a final list has been prepared for Council approval. Once approved, new appointees will begin serving at respective meetings in March 2017.

A motion was made by Council Member Matheson to approve all Consent Agenda items as presented, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Sprint Conditional Use Permit 2007-02 – Amendment

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock stated Sprint requests an amendment to conditional use permit No. 2007-02 to erect a temporary cell tower at 420 Chestnut Drive. Sprint currently has three alternative tower structures on top of the former Blowing Rock Hospital. Mr. Rothrock advised with the impending demolition of the hospital building, the applicant is requesting the CUP amendment to allow a temporary cellular site for up to six (6) months or more. Mr. Rothrock stated the lease between Sprint and Appalachian Regional Healthcare Service will expire near the end of February. Mr. Rothrock advised with the demolition of the former clinic and hospital to begin in the near future, the temporary solution for the Sprint antennas is placement of a cell on wheels (C.O.W.) on the property. Mr. Rothrock further advised the long term intention of Sprint is to place an alternative tower structure/antenna somewhere on the property that is hidden from public view. Mr. Rothrock stated that process will be explored further in the coming months as details are worked out between Sprint and the new property owner, Chestnut Development Partners.

Mr. Rothrock advised the proposed temporary cell tower (C.O.W. – Cell on Wheels) is planned on the northeast corner of the property just adjacent to the lower parking area of the former Blowing Rock Medical Clinic. Mr. Rothrock stated the proposed height is between 35 and 40 feet above the ground and is approximately the same height as a nearby utility pole. The location is out of the way of the demolition and site grading for the proposed Chestnut Development Partners condominium project.

Council Member Sweeting asked Mr. Rothrock if the hospital property had been sold. Mr. Rothrock stated that the sale was pending and the first part of demolition has begun with asbestos abatement, but no heavy machinery yet.

Council Member Sweeting commented that the original CUP in 2007 required the article of the Blowing Rock Land Use Code was included and reviewed by Sprint and signed. Council Member Sweeting advised to Mr. Rothrock that under the telecommunication land use code in section 16-18.6 it talks about the expiration of a tower permit. Council Member Sweeting asked if that includes this tower. Mr. Rothrock stated that it would not include what is currently up there now because those aren't towers, but instead three (3) antennas on the top of the building.

Mr. Mark Loubier of LCS Wireless, a vendor for Sprint, stated the time limit they request is six months to a year. He further stated that is the ideal amount of time to find a permanent solution.

Council Member Sweeting asked if the temporary tower makes any noise. Mr. Loubier stated it probably makes as much noise as a microwave oven.

Council Member Matheson asked if it could be enclosed. Mr. Loubier advised that it could.

Council Member Sweeting asked if they had looked at putting anything on the poles. Mr. Loubier stated they had as a long term solution, but it couldn't be deployed immediately and as it takes time to implement.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount stated he felt the issue was open ended, with plans being made with someone who has yet to close on the property. He further stated they could build one condo and wait two years before building another. Mr. Loubier said that is a possibility, but would not be the case because the tower will be gone and a permanent solution in place before that happens.

Council Member Steele asked if the electric equipment has to be right where it is. Mr. Loubier stated the location was selected due to its proximity to the power source. After brief discussion it was determined to be the best location for it.

Council Member Sweeting stated her concern was for the neighbors in the area. She explained the residents in that area have been waiting for seven months after initially being told the hospital demolition would begin last July. She further stated, they are going to have to deal with a lot of noise when the demolition begins and she feels that the tower would be one more thing the neighbors have to deal with. Council Member Sweeting advised it was her recommendation that Sprint find another location for the tower.

Council Member Steele stated he understood that it was a visual disruption, but he felt it could be fixed in a way that would hide most of it from public view.

After further discussion, Council Member Sweeting asked if any letters had been received regarding this tower being placed. Mr. Rothrock stated he had received three (3) letters back. Council Member Sweeting asked if the letters were positive or negative. Mr. Rothrock advised all three (3) were negative. Council Member Sweeting commented she felt the neighborhood had clearly communicated that they did not want the Tower and the Town should respect that.

Council Member Steele made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to deny the amendment request by Sprint, because of the neighborhood being disrupted and most of the residents in that area being seasonal and having to view this tower during that time frame.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount seconded for discussion.

Council Member Sweeting stated she felt that letters went out to residents and some of the neighbors responded back against the tower. She felt as though it was unfair to place this on the residents and encouraged Sprint to find an alternate location.

Council Member Steele stated he understood Council Member Sweeting's reservations, but felt something should be done to help accommodate the applicant's request.

Council Member Pickett stated he felt that when summer comes, the tower would just blend in with the surroundings and not be as visible.

After further discussion, to deny the permit, For: Council Member Sweeting, Against: Council Member Matheson, Council Member Pickett, Council Member Steele and Mayor Pro-tem Yount, motion denied.

Council Member Steele made a motion to approve the tower with the conditions; the structure be enclosed with wooden lap siding so the only thing visible is the pole sticking out the top, and that it is not to be there past December 31st of this year. Seconded by Council Member Pickett. For: Council Member Matheson and Mayor Pro-tem Yount voted in favor of the motion. Against: Council Member Sweeting, motion approved.

2. Primary Fire District

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock stated the Blowing Rock Fire Department has requested that the Primary Fire District be reduced from the current limits to those properties that more specifically match the definition of a Fire District in Appendix D of the NC Building Code. Some of the criteria required for a fire district include:

1. Two or more adjoining blocks where at least 50 percent of the ground area is built upon.
2. At least 50 percent of the built upon area is devoted to hotels/motels, restaurants, storage, and office use.

Mr. Rothrock advised no additional properties will be added to the primary fire district with the proposed map amendment.

Mayor Lawrence asked for public comment or questions. There being no comments or questions Council Member Sweeting made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the Primary Fire District request, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Edgewood Cottage Sculpture

Norma Suddreth presented Council with a proposed idea of a life size sculpture of Elliott Daingerfield. Mrs. Suddreth advised this would be a donation to the Town and would be placed on the lawn of Edgewood Cottage. Mrs. Suddreth stated the idea was created to be an interactive piece, connecting with the public, similar to other sculptures in downtown.

Mrs. Suddreth stated the request is to ask the Town to accept this gift at no expense to the Town and for the sculpture to be placed on the lawn of Edgewood cottage.

Council Member Matheson asked if any lighting would be placed on the sculpture. Mrs. Suddreth stated she hadn't thought of that, but yes that would be a great thing to do.

Council Member Sweeting stated she felt as though the gift was wonderful, but reminded Council that at the Town Council Retreat it was decided to look at a public art policy and have a planning session that has not yet happened. Council has scheduled a well-known speaker, Janet Greer, to come the end of April to speak and advise on the placement and style of public art.

Council Member Sweeting asked Mrs. Suddreth if she would be willing to wait until after this meeting in April to proceed with the sculpture. Mrs. Suddreth stated she did not feel as though this should be delayed. Mrs. Suddreth advised that this was historical as well as educational and they are ready to proceed.

Council Member Steele stated he could see Council Member Sweetings point, but he felt that this is in concert with current sculptures that are already located downtown at the library and the park. Council Member Steele further explained that he felt as though adding the Elliot Daingerfield sculpture to Edgewood Cottage would serve as the "bookend" to the downtown art.

Council Member Pickett stated he felt as though this sculpture should be at Edgewood Cottage because it was part of the theme.

President of the Historical Society, Rita White, stated that the artist did research and surrounding the project to ensure its authenticity. Ms. White further stated this sculpture would draw attention to Edgewood Cottage and would draw more visitors to Edgewood Cottage.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the Edgewood Cottage Sculpture, Council Member Sweeting asked Council Member Pickett if he would agree to an amendment to the motion that would wait for approval after the meeting with Janet Greer in April. Council Member Pickett proceeded with his original motion to approve as presented, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Council Member Steele and Mayor Pro-tem Yount voted in favor, Council Member Sweeting voted against, motion approved.

2. Laurel Lane Median Plan

Mr. Jim Pitts of the Village Foundation spoke regarding the Laurel Lane Median plan. Mr. Pitts advised he wanted to present an update and ask for approval of Phase One of the project. Mr. Pitts further advised Phase One is intended to only be the median design, local landscape architect, Bob Oelberg, prepared the landscape design. Mr. Pitts stated

that funds have been raised for the first phase which will cost approximately \$20,000. Mr. Pitts advised that fundraising is ongoing for the entire project.

Mr. Pitts stated the Village Foundation would like to have a simple sign placed at the end of the median (for visitors and residents to see) stating donations are funding the project. Mr. Pitts thanked the Town for the sidewalk work down Laurel Lane.

Landscape Architect Bob Oelberg presented his plan drawings for the Laurel Lane Median to Council.

Council Member Sweeting commented she felt the plan was beautiful. She asked if it had been presented to BRAAC for approval. Mr. Oelberg advised that it had.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the Laurel Lane Median Plan, seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Yount. Unanimously approved.

3. Request to Schedule Date for Shriner's Parade

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated the Shriners would be in Blowing Rock the weekend of June 2nd-4th for their annual Spring/Summer ceremonial. Mrs. Brown advised they are requesting to hold their parade on Saturday, June 3, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Council Member Sweeting stated she had received numerous phone calls and emails regarding this parade.

Council Member Steele asked how long this particular parade has been in Blowing Rock. Mr. George Wilcox stated from the audience every year except one year since 2009.

Mayor Lawrence advised the reason this is in question is because during the parade last year there were some "offensive comments" that were allegedly made. He felt that it was very unfortunate that, had occurred, but stated it could happen in any group.

Council Member Steele concurred with what Mayor Lawrence said and added that the Shriners do great things for children in the community. He further explained that the Shriners had raised money and donated to a local family in the past as well as contributed financially to the Town businesses when they have been here for their annual conference.

Mr. George Wilcox stated that he had met with the head of the Shriners about the concerns of last year's events and they felt it was very unfortunate that happened, and have committed to take measures to help keep anything like that from happening in the future.

Council Member Sweeting thanked Mr. Wilcox for speaking with them on behalf of the Town.

Council Member Matheson stated that if everyone recalled last year was a bit different than the typical Shriners Parade. There were some protesters at the parade as they thought that the Governor was going to be attending the parade. Council Member Matheson further stated he didn't want to make light of what happened, but felt that might have contributed to what went on at this particular parade.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount made a motion to approve the Shriners Parade, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

4. High Country Walk for Breast Cancer Research

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated Irene Sawyer is requesting to hold the first annual High Country Walk for Breast Cancer 5K Fun Run/Walk on Saturday, October 28, 2017. Mrs. Brown advised it would begin at 9:00 am in front of the American Legion and continue on to Laurel Lane to Wonderland Trail, down Meadow Lane, back on to Wonderland Trail and then return to the finish back at the American Legion.

Council Member Sweeting asked that the collection of trash be addressed. Neighbors in the areas where the races are run have complained about trash not being picked up following the races.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to approve the High Country Walk for Breast Cancer Research, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

5. High Country Half Marathon

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated the High Country Half Marathon requests to hold their 7th annual road race on Saturday, August 26, 2017 beginning at 7:30 p.m. from Kidd Brewer Stadium at ASU. Mrs. Brown advised the route through Blowing Rock will go from 221 to Laurel Lane, up Wonderland Trail, back on to Laurel Lane, and end at Davant Field.

Council Member Sweeting asked that the trash clean-up be monitored and asked Mrs. Brown to assess the situation with allowing beer to be served at the end of the race.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the High County Half Marathon, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

6. Hunter's Hero's Memorial Race

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated Hunter's Heroes Memorial Race Committee requests to hold their 6th, 7th & 8th annual 5k/10 mile run on Saturday, May 19 2018, May 18, 2019 & May 16, 2020. The 5k/10 mile run will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the Watauga County Sherriff's Department in Boone. The 5k will end at the Boone Police Department and the 10 mile run will end at the Blowing Rock Police Department. There will be water stations at Appalachian State Police Department and several along Highway 321. Mrs. Brown stated afterwards there will be activities in Memorial Park for participants, their families, and other supporters.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve Hunter's Hero's Memorial Race, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

7. Chamber Requests – Dates and Venues

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated due to the popularity of the American Legion Building and Blowing Rock in general, the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce would like to request consideration of the dates for the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce's events for years 2018 – 2020.

Council Member Sweeting stated she felt as though the Chamber should be charged when they use Town facilities and facilities should not be held for them to use unless they pay the rental fee.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the Chamber of Commerce date requests, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

8. Old Firehouse Proposal

Mr. Jim Pitts spoke on behalf of the Village Foundation with a response and feedback regarding the Town's proposal for the Old Firehouse. Mr. Pitts stated they request two (2) alternates to the proposal they received via letter from Scott Fogleman on January 20, 2017. Mr. Pitts advised the Village Foundation would like to extend the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) deadline from 30 days to May 1, 2017. Mr. Pitts further advised the Village Foundation would like to request the Town pay for the engineering study since the Town owns the building.

Council Member Sweeting stated she was happy to extend to May 1, 2017.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount stated the Old Fire Station belongs to the Town and he felt as though the Town should pay for the engineering study.

John Aldridge spoke from the audience to clarify that the May 1st date is to come to the Town with a memorandum of understanding and then the Village Foundation will have twelve months to make a decision on the next step.

Council Member Steele made a motion to extend to May 1st for the MOA deadline, for the Town to fund the \$3,000 for the engineer study with the twelve months to start May 1, 2017, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

9. New Town Website

Finance Officer Nicole Norman presented the new Town Website to the public, stating the new site was launched on January 20, 2017. Mrs. Norman pointed out several new features of the site including the facility rental booking area, calendar and service request submittal abilities. The previous site had served the Town since 1993 and was due for an update. The new site took approximately one year to complete. Mrs. Norman thanked Town Council for their investment in the new site.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:47 p.m. Mayor Pro-Tem Yount made a motion to enter into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143.318.11 (A) (6), Personnel Issues, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

Following Executive Session, Council re-entered the regular meeting at 9:15 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

MAYOR _____
 J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
 Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Budget Amendment Ordinance – Attachment A

Tax Releases – Attachment B

Surplus Equipment (Resolution #2017-02) – Attachment C

Appointments to Board and Commissions – Attachment D

Sprint Conditional Use Permit 2007- 02 – Amendment – Attachment E

Primary Fire District – Attachment F

Laurel Lane Median Plan – Attachment G

Chamber Requests – Dates & Venues - H