

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
March 14, 2017

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, March 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 Pickett made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular and closed session meetings held on February 14, 2017, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND REPORTS

Highway 321 Valley Boulevard Construction Update

Kipp Turner of Maymead Construction began his monthly update by stating the duct bank work has continued and is nearing completion. Mr. Turner advised an additional crew was added to help complete the work quicker. Mr. Turner stated work on the water line has been completed from Blackberry Road to The Rock Road. Mr. Turner advised crews are currently working on the water line at Village Condos and will be working their way back up to Blackberry Condos. Mr. Turner explained the sources of the flagging and traffic back ups has been the combination of duct bank work, paving and water line installation.

Mr. Turner advised wall construction continues down the mountain, about half a dozen walls are still left to complete. Mr. Turner further advised they are currently working on a traffic pattern switch to allow wall work to continue.

Mr. Turner stated concrete curb and guttering work has continued down the mountain and guttering has been poured in the Norwood Circle area. Mr. Turner further advised that as weather permits, work will continue in the Town section, with the most pressing area being The Rock Road.

Mr. Turner stated due to the good weather a lot of paving was completed in February with paving having been completed in the Norwood Circle and the Rock Road areas as well as down the mountain.

Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Turner for his update.

CONSENT AGENDA

Town Manager Ed Evans presented the following consent agenda items:

1. Tax Releases

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for releases (adjustments) and refunds. Four (4) tax releases totaling \$1,302.57 and two (2) refunds totaling \$1,045.76 have been identified for Council approval. **Tax Releases- Attachment A**

2. Sunset Drive Streetscape & Gateway Design Agreement Draft

Preliminary concepts for improving the streetscape and gateway elements on Sunset Boulevard, Destination by Design outlined their next scope of work in a draft agreement presented to Council.

3. Surplus Equipment (Resolution #2017-02)

Items that have been identified as surplus; three (3) metal news racks to be sold via Gov Deals. **Surplus Equipment (Resolution #2017-02)- Attachment B**

A motion was made by Council Member Sweeting to approve all Consent Agenda items as presented, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Yount. Unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Proposed Change to Land Use Code – Metal Roofing

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock stated over the past 18 months several commercial projects and one residential (commercial rental) project have requested the use of metal roofing. Mr. Rothrock advised metal roofing has become a popular choice due to its rustic characteristics as well as durability. Mr. Rothrock further advised some of the recent projects that have been approved include: Foggy Rock Restaurant, White Fence Farm (residential), Sunny Rock Restaurant, First Baptist Church, and My Mountain Home.

Mr. Rothrock stated the current ordinance requires Town Council approval if the proposed metal roof is more than 25% of the overall roof structure. Mr. Rothrock advised Council asked Planning Board to review a draft ordinance that would allow staff to approve metal

roofing on commercial buildings, with more specifics with respect to roof material color. Mr. Rothrock reviewed three (3) draft ordinances for Council's approval.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to accept the proposed changes to the land use code on the metal roofing review, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved. **Land Use Code- Metal Roofing- Attachment C**

2. Proposed Change to Land Use Code – BRAAC Membership

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock stated in 2015 an ordinance was adopted which reduced BRAAC membership from nine (9) residents and citizens of the Town's planning and zoning jurisdiction to seven (7) members, to make it easier to obtain a quorum of four (4) members to conduct official business. Mr. Rothrock further stated BRAAC asked that the BRAAC membership be reduced again from seven (7) members to five (5), and the related quorum be reduced from four (4) to three (3).

Council Member Matheson made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Steele made a motion to accept the change to the land use code, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved. **Land Use Code- BRAAC Membership- Attachment D**

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sprint CUP Amendment Follow-up

Mr. Rothrock stated Town Council approved an amendment to the CUP for Sprint to erect a temporary cell tower at the former Blowing Rock Hospital site on Chestnut Drive that will expire on December 31, 2017. Mr. Rothrock advised the CUP amendment required the applicant to provide an update to Town Council by the March Town Council meeting as to their plans for providing long term cell service to the area. Mr. Rothrock further advised Mark Loubier confirmed in an email that Sprint is pursuing a DAS antenna system with American Tower similar to those used by AT&T in the area.

Mr. Rothrock stated since the February Council meeting, Sprint signed the Conditional Use Permit and has installed screening fencing to hide the base and equipment for the cell on wheels (C.O.W). Mr. Rothrock advised the antenna is 37.5 feet above the ground and is currently in operation.

Council Member Sweeting asked if the hospital property had been sold. Mr. Rothrock advised the sale had not happened yet and that demolition of the building is the hospital's responsibility and the closing on the property will happen after the demolition is completed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Blowing Rock Horseshow Presentation

Mr. Maurice Ewing gave a brief background on the Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show and showed a video about the history of the Horse Show. Mr. Ewing stated the purpose is to emphasize the importance of the horse show to the economy of Blowing Rock. Mr. Ewing advised recently there have been other locations that have expressed interest in having the horse show move to their locations, which would be a significant negative impact on the Town of Blowing Rock should that occur.

Mayor Lawrence and Council thanked Mr. Ewing for sharing his information and for his hard work on the Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show Board.

2. Tax Interest Release

Town Manager Ed Evans stated property belonging to Hillary Hutto had unpaid property taxes for 2009 and 2010 tax years. Mr. Evans advised the Bank of Granite foreclosed on the property in February 2012 and the Town attempted to have the bank pay the unpaid taxes, but they remained unpaid. Mr. Evans further advised in 2012 RG Investments purchased the property. Before closing, the Attorney's office called to check on the status of taxes and were told the account was current, when in fact it was not. Mr. Evans stated due to the clerical error that occurred in our office, staff feels like release of the interest is due on the account. Mr. Evans advised the discovery of this error occurred due to a recent real estate transaction. The tax due for the two years combined is \$6,469.12, the interest charge release request is in the amount of \$4,019.34.

After brief discussion Council Member Matheson made a motion to release the interest charge in the amount of \$4,019.34, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved. **Tax Interest Release – Attachment E**

3. Consideration of Audit Contract

Town Manager Evans stated a request for proposals (RFP) for audit services was sent out electronically to audit firms within a fifty (50) mile radius of Blowing Rock, resulting in fifteen (15) firms being contacted. Mr. Evans advised two audit firms submitted proposals including the Town's current firm Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, P.C. and Boone auditor Misty D. Watson, CPA, P.A. Mr. Evans further advised two firms declined submittal of a bid and the remaining eleven (11) firms provided no response at all. Mr. Evans stated the proposed fee from Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, P.C. would be \$23,000 and the proposed fee from Misty D. Watson, P.A. would be \$18,400. Mr. Evans discussed the two firms and advised Council staff recommended remaining with the Town's current firm Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, P.C.

Council Member Sweeting asked when the last time the audit contract had been bid out. Finance Officer Nicole Norman advised no official documentation has been found showing this process to have been bid out in the past. Ms. Norman further advised the

current audit firm recalls in the past having to submit a bid proposal to Council, but that no documentation has been found to support that.

Council Member Sweeting stated the reason behind wanting to put this contract out for bid was so Council could see what options were out there and so they could be good stewards of the tax payer's money.

Council Member Steele asked how many auditors typically work on our audit. Ms. Norman advised typically four (4) to five (5) for the majority of the audit process and two (2) to three (3) toward the end of the audit.

After brief discussion Council Member Pickett made a motion to accept Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, P.C. bid. The motion died for lack of a second.

Council Member Sweeting stated she had some concerns. She advised this was the first time the Town has bid this service out and she felt like it was in the best interest of the Town and the tax payers to try a lower cost firm.

Council Member Steele stated he had concerns with going with a smaller firm and felt as though in the end it could be more of a burden on our staff working with a smaller firm.

David Harwood commented from the audience he has worked with both audit firms in the past and he suggested calling both firms references before Council makes a decision either way.

After further discussion Mayor Pro-Tem Yount made a motion to reject both firms bids and extend the contract to Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, P.C., seconded by Council Member Pickett. Council Member Matheson stated he felt it would be in the Town's best interest to take David Harwood's advice and contact each of the firms references within the next thirty (30) days and wait until the April Council meeting to make a decision. Council Member Sweeting and Council Member Steele concurred.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount withdrew his motion.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to table the request until the April Council Meeting and during that time have Town Manager Ed Evans and Finance Officer Nicole Norman cross check the references and businesses the auditors have worked with and bring the item up for discussion at the April meeting, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Police Chief Tony Jones gave Council an update on the ongoing Hwy 321 speeding topic via PowerPoint presentation. **Hwy 321 Speeding Update PowerPoint- Attachment F**

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Tax Releases – Attachment A

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

Land Use Code – Metal Roofing – Attachment C

Land Use Code – BRAAC Membership – Attachment D

Tax Interest Release – Attachment E

Hwy 321 Speeding Update PowerPoint – Attachment F