

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
April 11, 2017

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, April 11, 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 with the following change, move Amendment Resolution Amending Sales Tax Distribution to the first item under new business due to having two county commissioners, John Welch and Larry Turnbow present. Seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND REPORTS

Highway 321 Valley Boulevard Construction Update

Kipp Turner of Maymead Construction was unable to attend the meeting. Planning Director Kevin Rothrock gave an update Kipp Turner provided via email:

- The main utility duct bank is essentially complete. There are some lateral tie-ins and setting of utility boxes behind the curbs that are yet to be completed.
- The 6" water line from Rock Road to Vista Condos has been installed. The utility contractor will be installing several vaults and pressure reducing valves before finalizing the overall installation.
- The utility contractor is also adjusting fire hydrants in the town portion of the project on the Northbound side to provide greater accessibility for the fire department.
- Grading for sidewalk and the pouring of concrete sidewalk is underway from North of Norwood Circle towards Country Club Drive.
- A portion of asphalt paving along US 321 below Rock Road was completed yesterday with approximately 400' of curb and gutter placed today. Tomorrow, curb and gutter will be installed across from the Green Park Inn out to Rock Road

on the southbound side. Once the concrete has cured, additional paving will take place along the newly placed curb in this area, working towards a traffic shift to the southbound side scheduled for next week.

- Paving will also take place this week from Country Club Drive towards the Fairway Condos and continue east of Pinnacle on the north bound side over the next several days. Curb and gutter will quickly follow in this area once the asphalt base is to grade.
- Milling of portions of the old road is currently taking place between Pinnacle Drive and Rock Road to provide a better tie-in with the old asphalt.
- 321 between Norwood Circle and Green Hill Road will continue to be a primary focus in the coming weeks as we work to complete the multiple lanes in this area as soon as possible. Multiple traffic shifts should be expected in order to complete the work. Once additional lanes are open, work behind the curbs will continue such as sidewalk and driveway construction. Work in the intersection will also continue.
- Paving is also continuing on the mountain portion of the project from the Blackberry Condos towards Green Hill Road.
- The drilling is complete on the last major wall which is just South of Cone Orchard Road. Excavation for the concrete facing on the wall has begun. There are still some smaller walls to be completed on the mountain.
- Construction has also begun at the North drive into the Holiday Inn for an additional wall to be installed along the parking lot and drive to provide an adequate shoulder and improve the safety of the driveway.
- As a final note, there will be no lane closures this Friday, Saturday, or Sunday due to the Easter Holiday. Lane closures will continue through this Thursday and resume next Monday morning.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular meeting held on March 14, 2017 and for Departmental Meetings held on March 22 and 23, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Town Manager Ed Evans presented the following consent agenda items:

1. Resolutions – Opposition to HB-64 and SB-94

Representatives Warren, Conrad, Jones, and Collins sponsored House Bill 64, entitled “An Act to Require That All Municipal Elections Be Held in Even-Numbered Years. Senators Rabin and Sanderson sponsored Senate Bill 94, entitled “An Act to Add Transparency to Certain Elections by Requiring That Elections Currently Conducted on a Nonpartisan Basis Be Conducted on a Partisan Basis and to Make Various Conforming Statutory Changes. **Resolutions Opposition to HB-64 and SB-94- Attachment A**

2. Resolution – Surplus Equipment Request

Items to be sold include a 2006 Chevrolet Colorado (Public Works Department) and a 2000 Ford F-150 XL (Parks and Recreation Department). These vehicles have been removed from service due to their inability to pass NC State vehicle inspection. Also request the disposal of thirty four (34) Fire Station overhead lighting fixtures. These fixtures are not able to be repurposed by the Town and therefore we request to sell via GovDeals. **Resolution Surplus Equipment- Attachment B**

3. Heather Ridge Annexation Request

An application for annexation of two properties at 194 Heather Ridge Lane for connecting to Town sewer. A public hearing will be scheduled for May 9, 2017. **Heather Ridge Annexation Request- Attachment C**

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, Council Member Sweeting stated she would like to say Council works very hard to be non-partisan and do what is right for Blowing Rock and that is one of the reasons she is opposed to the bills presented. Mayor Lawrence concurred. Council Member Pickett seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Consideration of Audit Contract

Town Manager Evans recapped the audit contract consideration that was originally presented at the March 14, 2017 Town Council meeting. Town Manager Evans stated he would like to publicly apologize to Council, the public and to Misty Watson, CPA and admit that he made a mistake in a statement made. Town Manager Evans advised he told Council that Ms. Watson was late on an audit, which he believed to be accurate, not being aware that the LCG extended the deadline for audits to be completed due to the flooding that occurred in Eastern North Carolina and that it applied to the entire state and not just the areas affected. Town Manager Evans explained his perception was the audit was late, when in fact it was not. He apologized again directly to Ms. Watson and to Council and expressed that he didn't want his misconception to in any way affect Council's decision on choosing an audit firm.

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.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to accept Misty Watson's bid of \$18,400 for a three (3) year contract, seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Yount. Mayor Lawrence asked for discussion on the item. Council Member Steele stated over the years Council has gone out to get competitive bids and he felt that is what happened with this bid. Council Member

Steele advised he concurred with Council Member Sweeting that Council should take the lower bid and he felt it was in the best interest of the Town.

Council Member Matheson stated he concurred as well and he wanted to make it known the Town has had a good working relationship with Combs, Tennant & Carpenter over the years, but the difference in price over the next few years is substantial and he felt Council needed to be good stewards of Town funds.

After brief discussion, the motion stood. For: Council Member Matheson and Council Member Steele voted in favor of the motion. Against: Council Member Pickett, motion approved.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Amendment – Resolution Amending Sales Tax Distribution

Watauga County Commission Chairman John Welch presented an amendment resolution amending Sales Tax Distribution. **Amendment Resolution Amending Sales Tax Distribution-Attachment D**

2. Electric Vehicle Charging Station Proposal

Mayor Lawrence recused himself because he is a member of the Blue Ridge Energy Board of Directors.

John Jacobs from Blue Ridge Energies stated the original request for an electric vehicle charging station came from previous Town Manager Scott Fogleman two (2) years ago. Mr. Jacobs advised Blue Ridge Energies was awarded a funding grant, which allows up to \$5,000, from Duke Energy to install an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station in downtown Blowing Rock at the Public Parking deck on Wallingford Rd. Mr. Jacobs stated the Town will need to cover approximately \$2,177 to install the charging station and in addition, the cost of the installation of the electrical wiring between the load center and charger. Mr. Jacobs explained the reason Blowing Rock is highly recommended for a charging station is due to the proximity to the Parkway and the high volume of tourism.

Council Member Matheson asked what the average charge is for other Towns that currently have a charging station. Mr. Jacobs advised most other Towns are not charging initially.

Council Member Steele asked the reasoning for the selected location and why it was chosen to be underneath the Parking Deck rather than on top where it would be visible. Mr. Jacobs explained it is due to the proximity to an electrical load center. The further away from that center would up the cost due to additional wiring. Council Member Sweeting commented the Town has been looking at this for years and thanked Mr. Jacob's for his work on getting the grant.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the request to put an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station at Wallingford Parking Deck. Seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

3. Policy Consideration and Resolution – Surplus Property Disposal Policy

Town Manager Evans presented a policy and resolution for Council's consideration that would allow staff to dispose of personal property valued less than \$30,000. Town Manager Evans advised this will enable staff to implement good housekeeping measures to ensure optimum usage of tax dollars.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to approve the resolution for surplus property, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved. **Resolution Surplus Property Disposal Policy – Attachment E**

4. Radar Sign Comparison

Police Chief Tony Jones stated Council asked him to research radar signage for Hwy 321. Chief Jones advised his research concluded a choice between two signs (All Traffic and Evolis) and reviewed the features of each. Chief Jones stated the primary difference between the two signs were All Traffic would allow remote programming and download ability, but that sign was significantly more expensive than the Evolis sign. Chief Jones advised his recommendation would be to purchase the less expensive sign, the Evolis sign.

After brief discussion Council Member Sweeting advised she would like to wait until the stop light is installed at Skyline Drive to see if that helps with speeding before purchasing a radar sign. All of Council agreed to wait.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Evans gave a brief report to Council:

- Four Town employees; John Burwell, Trathen Greene, Douglas Lee and James Townsend received certifications for the State of North Carolina Water Pollution Control System.
- The Town received final payment of \$102,738.35 from FEMA that was part of the settlement from road damage due to the flooding in FY13-14.
- On GovDeals the Street Sweeper sold for \$4,483.48, the Pool Weasel sold for \$233.10 and the Monitor Heaters sold for \$354.28.
- The gravel yard site on Cone Road has been cleaned up and cleared. Additional work will continue.
- The Blowing Rock Chamber Board made a statement earlier in the year that the Farmer's Market on Park Avenue would not occur this year due to insufficient interest by potential participants. That decision has now been rescinded and the Farmer's Market is scheduled to proceed as originally planned.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

MAYOR _____
 J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
 Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Resolutions Opposition to HB-64 and SB-94 - Attachment A

Resolution Surplus Equipment - Attachment B

Heather Ridge Annexation Request - Attachment C -1, C-2

Amendment Resolution Amending Sales Tax Distribution - Attachment D

Resolution Surplus Property Disposal Policy – Attachment E