

Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission
Minutes
June 2, 2016

BRAAC Members Attending: Curt Andrews, Bo Henderson, Melissa Pickett, Deborah McDowell and Jennifer Chick

BRAAC Members Absent: Anne Barnes

Staff Members: Jennifer Brown, Chris Pate and Autumn Goheen

This meeting was called to order by Curt at 5:33 p.m.

Approve May 5, 2016 Minutes: Curt made suggestions for minor edits to the May 5 minutes. Corrections were discussed and Melissa made a motion to approve the corrected minutes, Jennifer Chick seconded, and it was a unanimous vote to approve.

Budget Update/Annual Fundraising Collection/Hanging Basket Collection: Jennifer stated that to date \$24,225 had been collected for revenue and only \$14,983 has been spent. Revenue versus Expense projections are on target for this fiscal year. She also stated that any monies collected after July 1 would be incorporated into the next fiscal year's budget. Bo recommended a \$25 increase to the minimum hanging basket donation requirement bringing it to \$75. The minimum has been set at \$50 for the past 6-8 years. Chris stated that it costs \$33 per basket for materials which doesn't include labor costs for maintenance. Bo made the motion to increase the minimum donation for baskets to \$75. Deborah seconded and it was a unanimous vote to approve.

Chris stated that West Jefferson and Banner Elk were attempting to emulate the street scape of downtown Blowing Rock with additions of planters and hanging baskets. Bo addressed what a wonderful testament to the Town and Chris that was and that he has seen, on numerous occasions, peoples stopping to take pictures of our baskets and gardens. Bo suggested we place an article in the Blowing Rocket to highlight the work that goes into the baskets in an effort to educate the community about the work being done.

Jennifer stated that Chris was approached by a member of the community who requested that the orientation of the hanging baskets be moved to parallel to the sidewalks to prevent the baskets from impeding foot traffic. Chris stated that changing the orientation of the baskets would not only drastically change the appearance of the street scape but would also require a lot of man hours to complete and would not be possible to complete while the baskets are hanging. After further discussion the group was in favor of leaving them in their current position.

Village Foundation Grant Follow-up: Curt stated that we didn't receive the grant. It is speculated that we didn't receive the grant because the Village Foundation wanted to focus more on capital improvements. Curt then suggested that BRAAC support the financial responsibility for the acquisition of an intern for Chris Pate. Jennifer then stated that Scott has approved her request for a part-time employee to assist Chris in tasks for the summer to come out of the Parks and Recreation Budget. She also stated that she has requested a full time position be added into her FY2017 budget and doesn't want BRAAC to spend that money until a decision is made at the June Town Council meeting. Melissa suggested this be tabled until the next meeting after the Town's 2016-2017 budget is voted on.

Clean-up Day Follow-up: Melissa suggested we cut the food cost and improve volunteer recruitment due to the low turnout. Jennifer stated that Mother's Day and Art in the Park could have hindered volunteer participation. She also noted that more could have been done with advertising. Curt suggested trying press releases again next

year and requesting RSVPs. Jennifer Chick suggested that we print a “Thank You” in the newspaper recognizing this year’s volunteers and donors. Jennifer Brown suggested reviewing the 2017 calendar to go ahead and schedule next year’s Clean-up Day and other events to be able to advertise earlier.

School Gardens Request (Need two volunteers to weed in August): Jennifer stated that Anne sent an email noting the school will water but they need two volunteers to weed the beds on Sunset in August. Deborah and Curt volunteered for week 1, Bo volunteered for week 2, Melissa and Jennifer Chick volunteered for week 3 and Curt and Jennifer Chick volunteered for week 4.

Donation Letter: Jennifer Brown suggested the donation letter be edited for improvements. She suggested an explanation be printed about the mailers being mailed twice in one calendar year. Melissa recommended to print what we are raising money for and why, in an effort to increase donation amounts. Jennifer Brown suggested giving donors an option for their donations to be allocated to either baskets or to the general fund. Melissa suggested also including the 321 and Parkway median projects to be turned over to the Town in spring 2017 that will increase the need for donations. Chris stated the Parkway Median project should be completed this fall and there are plans in the meantime to frame up a sign to better envision the space that it will take up. Melissa also stated she had received numerous requests to extend the hanging baskets to both ends of main street. Jennifer Brown stated that the poles available won’t hold the baskets and there would be more maintenance costs in order to keep them watered and pruned. Jennifer Brown will email last year’s donation letter to BRAAC members for edits to be finished and letters to be mailed in August.

Other Business: The board discussed defining BRAAC members’ duties and responsibilities in an effort to provide more clarity. It was decided that Deborah would handle advertisements, Curt would handle proposals, Melissa would handle grants, Jennifer Chick will handle “Thank You” letters, and Anne will handle volunteer recruitment and donation communications.

Curt suggested BRAAC assist Chris in park funds acquisitions. Chris is creating a plan for Annie Cannon and should have it completed by August. Once the plan is complete, proposals will be made to community members for donations.

Bo discussed the confusion regarding the flower beds in front of Memorial Park and upkeep by the Garden Club. He proposed that a member of the Garden Club be invited as an ex-officio member of BRAAC to alleviate confusion and improve communication between the two groups.

Bo requested the BRAAC meeting for July 7 be moved to an earlier time due to schedule conflicts. Several members had schedule conflicts and Bo motioned to cancel the July BRAAC meeting and Melissa seconded and it was a unanimous vote to approve.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 4 at 5:30 p.m.