

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
August 8, 2017

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, August 8, 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, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Planning and Inspections Director Kevin Rothrock, Public Works and Utilities Director Mike Wilcox, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, who recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

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

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Council Member Pickett made a motion to adopt the agenda, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND REPORTS

Highway 321 Valley Boulevard Construction Update

Kipp Turner of Maymead Construction began his monthly update on the Highway Widening Project by stating crews have been working on removal and replacing some areas of concrete that had been damaged over the past few years. Mr. Turner further stated crews have made some repairs in drainage boxes as well as back filling low spots behind the curb with some dirt. Mr. Turner stated this is the reason for lane closures, and they have tried to keep a lane open in one direction at all times to keep traffic moving. Mr. Turner stated the lane closures will continue as the final layer of asphalt is applied.

Mr. Turner mentioned they went ahead and poured back the sidewalk where AT&T had torn up the sidewalk on Sunset Drive.

Mr. Turner advised crews will be mindful of ASU move in weekend and not have traffic delays that weekend.

Mr. Turner gave a time line for asphalt placement:

- Final layer of asphalt will begin on the Northbound side starting at Greenhill Road working down towards Tanger. When the Northbound side is completed crews will then flip around and start the Southbound side.

- After completion of the Northbound and Southbound sides they will go back and tie-in the side streets.
- The completion of this phase will take approximately two (2) to three (3) weeks.
- Crews will give permanent paving some curing time and then will have the permanent signage as well as permanent pavement markings installed in the fall.
- There will be interim pavement markings in between the permanent ones, but the pavement needs curing time before the final markings can be applied.

Mr. Turner gave an update on the Skyline Drive stop sign. He advised crews have gone ahead and cut in the traffic loops in the pavement so it won't interfere with the final asphalt placement. Mr. Turner further advised he received authorization to order the traffic signal poles, but it could be late December before the light is installed. Mr. Turner concluded his monthly update with a brief update of wall work continuing down the mountain.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount asked if the guard rails through Town are supposed to appear rusted. Mr. Turner advised in the original memorandum of understanding was for those to be "naturalized guard rail" or in other words rusted.

Council Member Steele asked about the status of the street light poles. Mr. Turner advised Blue Ridge Electric is responsible for that installation, but he did know they had started drilling the foundations for those. Manager Evans stated the approximate time frame to have that work done is around October.

Council Member Sweeting asked if there is an estimated completion date. Mr. Turner explained currently the end of the year is the tentative time frame to complete and have a four-lane traffic pattern. He further explained the final asphalt layer and final markings are temperature sensitive and completion time may vary depending on weather and it could be spring before that is completed.

Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Turner for his update.

Senator Deanna Ballard

Senator Deanna Ballard gave an update of what is going on at the Legislature on the Senate level.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular meeting and Closed Session held on July 11, 2017, seconded by Council Member Sweeting with the following correction: Council re-entered open session at 8:35 p.m. Council Member Sweeting made a motion to remove Town Manager Evans from the (six) 6-month new hire probation, give him 5% salary increase and review his performance again in (six) 6 months at his one year anniversary, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved. There being no further business to discuss, Council Member Matheson made a motion to adjourn at 8:36 p.m, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Lawrence recused himself due to his affiliation with Blue Ridge Electric/Blue Ridge Energies since Ridgeline is a subsidiary company.

Capital Equipment and Financing

The Town of Blowing Rock requested financing proposals from nine (9) area banks to finance the acquisition of capital vehicles approved in the FY 2017-2018 Budget. Staff recommends the financing bid be awarded to SunTrust Bank for 1.98%.

Ridgeline, Inc – Fiber Optic License Agreement

Ridgeline Inc., a North Carolina limited liability company and subsidiary of Blue Ridge Energy has run fiber to the Town's buildings for broadband interconnection to consolidate phone and Internet services. This is the pipeline over which Skybest broadband service will operate and is the prelude to our upcoming transition from AT&T to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone and Internet services. This is the first step in reducing expenses for our telephone service and Internet service while improving and modernizing our system performance. This transition to using Ridgeline, Inc. dark fiber service will replace most of our Charter services and numerous accounts with AT&T, resulting in overall savings of approximately \$20,000 per year.

Council Member Steele commented, "with the \$20,000 a year savings over a five year period this new system will pay for itself."

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Golf Cart Ordinance Amendment – Possum Hollow Road

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock stated in March 2012, Council adopted an ordinance allowing the use of golf carts on all Town streets but prohibited use on Valley Blvd, except for crossing at Sunset Drive and Green Hill Road/Rock Road. The Town has received some requests to allow golf cart crossing at Possum Hollow Road to Shoppes on the Parkway. Mr. Rothrock advised the only other remaining intersection not allowing golf cart crossing is South Main Street and Skyland View Drive, which will soon be signalized. As such, both intersection have been included in the draft ordinance to allow golf cart crossing. Mr. Rothrock further advised no golf carts will be allowed to travel on Valley Blvd.

Council Member Sweeting asked if this had gone to Planning Board first. Mr. Rothrock advised it had not and explained that the original Golf Cart Ordinance didn't either, it went straight to Council.

Council Member Matheson asked how many Golf Carts are currently registered. Mr. Rothrock stated he did not know the exact number, but knew there were quite a few.

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

Council Member Matheson made a motion to amend the golf cart ordinance to allow golf cart crossing at Shoppes on the Parkway, but not to allow golf cart crossing at South Main and Skyline View Drive until the stoplight is installed, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Public Art Policy

Town Manager Evans advised Council endorsed having Art Consultant, Jean Greer, come to Blowing Rock to address Council and the community stakeholders about public art. Ms. Greer visited sites in Town and reviewed status reports with the NC DOT staff and presented a Power Point Presentation at a workshop entitled "Overview of Public Art Practices" which was held on April 24, 2017. Town Manager Evans further advised that during the presentation, Ms. Greer recommended the Town develop a Public Art Policy to guide for future art display decisions and gave a sample art policy from Durham, NC.

Town Manager Evans stated a draft policy was developed by input from several sources and was drafted by Attorney, John Aldridge. He was aided by Lee Carol Giduz, sample art policies from other towns, including the sample provided by Ms. Greer from Durham, NC and by Manager Evans.

John Aldridge commented from the audience that he only served as a scrivener drafting this document and nothing more.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to study this policy and discuss at the next Council Meeting, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

2. Storage Building

Town Manager Evans advised the storage building behind the WWTP is in poor condition and is in danger of collapse. The building currently serves as a storage location for most departments of the Town. Manager Evans further advised, some of the items stored can be eliminated, but the building is valuable for storage as the Town has very few locations to store infrequently used items.

Manager Evans stated Town staff recommends that the building be saved and whatever money is spent to save this building is a good investment to the Town. He also advised \$30,000 was approved in the Budget to go toward these repairs.

Council Member Sweeting asked what the current dimensions of the building are and if a building of that size is necessary. Building Inspector John Warren advised the building is about 1,500 square feet.

Council Member Sweeting asked if the concrete slab was useable. Mr. Warren advised currently it was not. He stated it along with the building needs repair as a whole. Council Member Sweeting advised she was inquiring because she had looked at the building and due to the condition, she didn't feel it was worth putting any money into.

Manager Evans advised the building is valuable to the Town for storage and to build a building of that same size would cost a great deal more. If the Town were to build another building it would have to fall under new building code regulations.

Council Member Sweeting asked if a metal storage until was allowed. Manager Evans advised staff would do whatever Council wanted them to do. Council Member Matheson reiterated that anything that is put there to replace the current structure will fall under new building codes and could cost a great deal more than what is currently budgeted.

Council Member Sweeting stated she had looked online at metal storage buildings and would like staff to research that option. Mr. Warren advised it should be considered that the current building is 1,500 square feet, has wiring, a bathroom and is a commercial building that has a lot of potential and more functional than just a metal storage building. Council Member Sweeting advised she would like an inventory of what needs to be stored in the building and she didn't feel there was a need to utilize the building with a bathroom and electricity if it were for storage only. Council Member Pickett and Council Member Matheson stated the electricity was used.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount stated he felt as though Manager Evans had studied this and he had confidence in him and didn't feel as though Council needed to micromanage him over a building.

Council Member Steele suggested exploring a few other options and bringing back before Council at another meeting to discuss. It was the consensus of all of Council to bring back for discussion at a later Council Meeting once more information has been gathered.

3. Early Voting Site

Town Manager Evans stated Early voting in Watauga County begins on October 19 with Election Day occurring on Tuesday, November 7. The early voting concludes on Saturday, November 4 at noon. This is a total of seventeen and one-half voting days. Some interest has been expressed in having an early voting site in Blowing Rock. The process to move this forward is for the Town to request, in writing, to have such a site. This would be considered by the Watauga County Board of Elections, who may or may not allow an alternate site. The number of days can be shorter than the seventeen days.

If the Town can have an early voting site, five people would be assigned from the county and four of those individuals would earn \$10.50 per hour and one would earn \$12.00 per hour. For an eight-hour day, the fee would be \$432.00 per day times the number of days, or \$7,560 for the seventeen and one half days.

Blowing Rock residences who live in Caldwell County would not be able to participate in the early voting in Blowing Rock. They would still have to vote at one of the two early voting sites in Caldwell County, by absentee ballot, or wait until Election Day.

Council briefly discussed the cost of having an early voting site vs the benefit.

Council Member Matheson made a motion not to pursue having an early voting site in Blowing Rock due to the cost, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Evans gave a brief report to Council:

- Center-line stripping is complete except Green Hill Road
- Side-line stripping is underway and eight roads are complete
- Planning Board and BRAAC will have a joint meeting August 17th to participate in a Sunset Gateway workshop
- Virginia Tech conceptual design will soon be complete
- The final Memorial Park tree report will soon be available

Town Manager Evans asked Council if they wished to have a workshop meeting to discuss the Tree Study and the Virginia Tech concept plan. Council discussed briefly and decided to hold the workshop meeting on August 22nd at 5:30 p.m. at Town Hall. Town Manager Evans advised this would not be a Public Hearing, but as with all public meetings, this would be open to the Public to attend.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Ridgeline, Inc – Fiber Optic License Agreement – Attachment A
Golf Cart Ordinance Amendment – Possum Hollow Road – Attachment B