

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
October 10, 2017

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, October 10, 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 Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND REPORTS

Highway 321 Valley Boulevard Construction Update

Kipp Turner of Maymead Construction began his monthly meeting by stating the subcontractor will be installing the reflectors in the road within the week. Mr. Turner further stated this should help light the road up especially during inclement weather. Mr. Turner advised final pavement markings on Hwy 321 have been completed and side streets should be completed within the next few weeks.

Mr. Turner further advised the sign contractor is scheduled to put the remaining signs up within the next few weeks. Mr. Turner stated after completion of these items the only other work left to be done in Town is the installation of the traffic light at Skyland Drive, he explained the boring has been done underground and all that is left is the poles. Mr. Turner stated he is hopeful the traffic light will be installed by the end of the year.

Mr. Turner advised wall work down the mountain is nearing completion. He further advised a lot of storm drain work is left to be completed. Mr. Turner stated paving is scheduled for Cone Orchard to Blue Ridge Vista condos and will result in lane closures and traffic interruptions.

Mayor Lawrence thanked Mr. Turner for his update.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular meeting and closed session held on September 12, 2017, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Budget Amendment Ordinance

Budget Amendment Ordinance to account for various items. **Budget Amendment Ordinance – Attachment A**

Tax Release and Refunds

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for releases (adjustments). Two (2) tax releases totaling \$1,138.12 have been identified for Council approval. **Tax Release and Refunds – Attachment B**

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

OLD BUSINESS

1. Dumpsters

Finance Officer, Nicole Norman stated following the presentation of facts found surrounding the Town's involvement in leasing commercial dumpsters at the September 12, 2017 Town Council meeting, the topic is now coming to Council for consideration of beginning to offer the service. Ms. Norman briefly reviewed the initial presentation from the September Council meeting. Ms. Norman advised if approved, staff recommends an initial purchase of six (6) dumpsters at a cost of approximately \$5,300 and rental of the dumpsters at the following rates:

2 Yd. Dumpster - \$20.00/month
4 Yd. Dumpster - \$25.00/month
6 Yd. Dumpster - \$30.00/month
8 Yd. Dumpster - \$35.00/month

Ms. Norman advised if approved, Town staff will begin charging the fee for the dumpsters upon delivery to the Town and the customer and at the end of the fiscal year allocated proceeds received from the monthly rental fees to offset the current years purchase costs to the Town for the dumpsters. Dumpsters not currently being rented, but being kept on hand as stock will be housed outdoors at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. A portion of the budget each year will be set aside for purchase of additional dumpsters for rental as necessary to supply for market demand.

Mayor Lawrence asked how the customer will be billed for the dumpsters and if the customer will have the option to purchase the dumpsters instead of renting. Ms. Norman advised the fee will be billed through the utility accounts and customers will have the option to purchase the dumpsters.

Council Member Sweeting asked how many businesses need a front-loading truck for the dumpsters they currently have. Manager Evans advised six (6) definite and perhaps five (5) more, but staff won't know for sure until they try. Manager Evans explained if the Town were to completely turn commercial trash service over to Republic, and Republic wanted to take it over, there would be six (6) customers unable to do so and perhaps up to five (5) more.

Council Member Sweeting commented if the businesses could change to Republic then the Town wouldn't have to incur the cost. Manager Evans stated they could, but that would render one of the Town's investments of our trucks unnecessary. He further stated the Town bought new garbage trucks with rear load capabilities with the anticipation of emptying those dumpsters at a fee.

Council Member Sweeting asked for clarification on the total cost for the dumpsters. Ms. Norman advised the initial order would be six (6) dumpsters and the cost would be \$5,300. Manager Evans explained the life expectancy on a dumpster is ten (10) to twenty (20) years, depending on how they are treated, he felt as though these dumpsters would last approximately fifteen (15) years. He advised with this rental plan the dumpsters will be paid for in two and a half (2 ½) years and any amounts collected after that will be an incoming revenue for the Town, other than occasional maintenance that could occur.

Council Member Sweeting asked what the ordinance requires the Town to do as far as providing the dumpsters. Manager Evans stated there is nothing in the ordinance, it is just a service that is provided to our businesses so they can conduct business as trash removal is a necessity.

Council Member Steele advised when he first heard about this proposal he wasn't sure the Town should get involved in the dumpster business, but as he studied further he liked what he saw. Council Member Steele further advised he felt municipalities are going to struggle in the future to get additional income and felt as though this is a very good, economic decision to benefit the Town with additional revenue.

After further discussion. Council Member Pickett stated this is all services the Town currently provides and the only difference is billing the customer for a dumpster.

Council Member Matheson stated the advantage to having the dumpsters on hand is when something happens and the dumpster needs to be replaced it can be done that day and if it's with another company it could be a week or more before a new dumpster is delivered and many business, especially a restaurant can't wait that long.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount made a motion to accept the dumpster proposal as presented, seconded by Council Member Pickett. For: Mayor Pro-tem Yount, Council Member Pickett, Council Member Steele and Council Member Matheson, voted in favor of the motion. Against: Council Member Sweeting. Motion approved.

2. Virginia Tech

Manager Evans advised in Fall of 2016 the Town applied for a planning grant through NC Forestry Service and received the grant in April of 2017. This grant paid to have a design team from Virginia Tech create a design that included the American Legion bank facing Broyhill Park, the bank in front of the American Legion, the back of Memorial Park, Park Avenue and walkways in between all of those. The project group from Virginia Tech met with Town staff, Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission, and the NC Forestry Service several times to make sure they encompassed as much of the safety concerns as possible, as well as the beautification of these areas. They presented their final plan in August and staff along with BRAAC feel they have designed a plan that harnesses safety, beauty, and functionality.

Manager Evans advised he's aware Council has already seen this conceptual plan presentation before, and what staff is requesting is further direction and would like Council's input on what they like and don't like about the plan. Manager Evans further advised if staff gets approval of the concept, they would like to go ahead and start applying for grants to begin different portions of the project depending on funding availability.

Council Member Sweeting asked if staff could get pricing on each of the areas so Council could evaluate and prioritize the areas accordingly.

After some discussion Mayor Lawrence reiterated to Council that staff is only asking for them to approve the conceptual design and then the work will be done as funding becomes available. Council Member Pickett commented, once the concept is approved, then staff can work on applying for grants.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount advised he didn't feel the Town should pass up an opportunity to get grant money. Council Member Pickett concurred.

Council Member Matheson stated the ADA accessibility is especially an area that needs to be worked on. Manager Evans advised the lack of ADA accessibility in Town is being noticed and that he has received some comments from visitors about it.

Council Member Pickett made a motion to approve the concept, seconded by Council Member Sweeting, with the understanding staff bring back pricing of the areas for Council to prioritize based on cost. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount advised he would like to commend Virginia Tech on a great job and for all their hard work on this conceptual design.

NEW BUSINESS

1. NCDOT US Hwy 321 Landscape Plan

Manager Evans stated in November of 2016, Jeff Lackey presented the US 321 Bypass Preliminary Concepts to Blowing Rock staff. The presentation provided information and conceptual ideas for landscaping the US Hwy 321 corridor through Blowing Rock. The plan is a NCDOT Landmark -Design. The goal was to create a “Destination” – Connection to Downtown Blowing Rock, provide stakeholder involvement, Match the Character of the Valley Boulevard North Parkway intersection design, Enhance Gateways, and Preserve existing vegetation and incorporate natives where feasible. Slide 27 states Goals and Focus. Slides 28-29, 32, 35, 39, 44-45, 48-50, 54, and 58-59 provide insight into the conceptual ideas for the overall landscape plan for US Hwy 321. Specific plant details are not provided, but the NCDOT will ensure that plants are compatible with our climate and match the plan already implemented at the intersection of US 321 and the Parkway.

Jim Lackey from NCDOT presented a conceptual plan via power point to go forward with implementing the landscaping design.

Council Member Sweeting asked Mr. Lackey who pays for the landscape. Mr. Lackey advised the NCDOT Department pays for it and then the Town will be responsible for maintenance, so he wants to work with the Town on the design and make sure that the design is something the Town will be able and willing to maintain. Council Member Sweeting thanked Mr. Lackey and advised the Council had already anticipated the Town would have to maintain and have taken steps to accommodate for that.

Council Member Sweeting explained a current issue is when the trees were cut the sound level for the road has increased, and asked Mr. Lackey if he anticipated if the Town needs to add more trees to what he's going to put out there to help with sound from the road. Mr. Lackey advised in the transition areas he outlined in the plan, one of the things that will be a part of this plan is adding back larger trees where it's feasible. Mr. Lackey further advised if there is a specific area with a real sound issue to let him know and his office will accommodate that in the design plan. Council Member Sweeting suggested the residents that are having the sound issues should speak with Manager Evans and he can relay the information to Mr. Lackey.

Council Member Pickett asked Mr. Lackey if he would be willing to work with staff on options to help easily maintain the landscape, but still fit with his design plan. Mr. Lackey advised he would.

Manager Evans asked Mr. Lackey to provide an estimated timeline of implementation if Council approves the concept. Mr. Lackey advised estimated install is Fall 2018 and to be completed by spring of 2019. Mr. Lackey advised the Town would not start maintaining until a year after completion, which would be spring of 2020.

Mr. Lackey further stated NCDOT has \$350,000 to \$400,000 invested in this project and they want to make sure what they provide will be able to be maintained and make sure that Council is on board with the design. George Wilcox asked from the audience what the estimated cost would be for the Town to maintain this corridor. Mr. Lackey advised roughly \$2,000 to \$2,500 per month. Mayor Lawrence asked Mr. Lackey if that estimate accounted for six (6) months of no mowing, Mr. Lackey advised he had not taken that into account and that would lower the cost a bit.

Mayor Lawrence stated he felt the design was beautiful and fits well with Blowing Rock. Mayor Pro-tem Yount made a motion to approve the design, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

Council thanked Mr. Lackey and the department for all their hard work.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Evans gave a brief report to Council:

1. Council members Ray Pickett, Doug Matheson, Jim Steele and Albert Yount attended the North Carolina League of Municipalities annual conference in Greenville, North Carolina to take advantage of the latest information about legislative actions and learn about new opportunities for governing and efficiency.
2. Mayor JB Lawrence and Manger Evans participated in the State of the Town event hosted by the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce on September 18, 2017.
3. There are two opportunities to meet candidates coming up in October. One will be October 12 at 5:30 at the American Legion and the second will be on October 16 at 5:30 at the Blowing Rock School auditorium.
4. The telephone system is installed and we are experiencing some growing pains that we hope to have remedied soon. We ask everyone to please be patient as AT&T gets the lines pointed away from their switches to our new switches.
5. Tonda Spear, Hilari Hubner, and Ed Evans will be attending a training session on Public Records in Boone on October 18.
6. Tonda Spear just attended a two-day advanced Family Medical Leave Act training event in Asheville to better serve our employees and keep the Town straight and legal.
7. The Town expects to have a final recommendation from the NC Forestry Service, Urban Tree Division from Nancy Stair in November.
8. The survey for the Sunset Gateway project ends on November 13. Please take the time to let your thoughts be recorded by answering the survey questions.
9. Town Staff are still working with vendors to evaluate AML and what the different companies have to offer and at what price.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Manager Evans advised many people have been working long and hard, especially Albert and Doug, to get Blowing Rock Citizens an ambulance base in Blowing Rock. Manager Evans advised this topic is on the agenda for the Watauga County Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, October 17 at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner John Welch spoke briefly and thanked the Town for their leadership and partnership between the Town and the County.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to NCGS143-318.11 (5), At 7:40 p.m. Mayor Pro-tem Yount made a motion to enter Closed Session to discuss possible land acquisition, seconded by Council Member Pickett. At 7:43 p.m. Council re-entered open session. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Budget Amendment Ordinance – Attachment A
Tax Release and Refunds – Attachment B