

Town of Blowing Rock

Request for Council Action

FROM: Melissa D. Pickett, Chairperson for BRACC
SUBJECT: Letter from BRAAC Regarding Old Fire Station
TO: Mayor and Council
DATE: September 11, 2018
REQUESTED BY: BRAAC

Public Hearing Yes No Not required NA
Properly Advertised Yes No Not required NA

BACKGROUND:

The Blowing Rock Village Foundation has been working with the Town Council to possibly turn the old fire station into a Cultural Arts facility. The most recent meeting took place at the July 10, 2018 Town Council meeting in which the future of the project was not given a clear direction either way as to continuing or not. BRAAC would like Council to consider directing Blowing Rock Village Foundation to eliminate the old fire house from consideration in their plans for a Cultural Arts facility. This way the Blowing Rock Village Foundation can start exploring other options and Parks and Recreation can continue with their use of the building,

ATTACHMENTS: Letter from Melissa D. Pickett, Chairperson for BRACC

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission
1036 Main Street
Blowing Rock, North Carolina 28605

August 30, 2018

Town of Blowing Rock
Post Office Box 47
1036 Main Street
Blowing Rock, North Carolina 28605-0047

Dear Mayor Sellers and Members of Town Council,

I am writing today on behalf of the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission (BRAAC). We proudly serve at your pleasure and are charged as follows:

BRAAC shall have all of the responsibilities and duties imposed by the enabling ordinance and shall promote and assist in the implementation of general community beautification in accordance with adopted Town plans/policies. This commission also studies the appearance characteristics of the Town and recommends standards and policies of design for the Town.

As you are aware, we work hand-in-glove with the Blowing Rock Parks and Recreation and Landscaping (BRP&R&L) department and, thus, we are intimately aware of their operations. As such, we appeal to you to make and pass a motion at the September 2018 Town Council Meeting to definitively declare the former Blowing Rock firehouse on Park Avenue for continued and improved use by BRP&R&L.

Until such declaration is made, plans to further develop our Blowing Rock quality-of-life projects are stalled. These include progressing with the conceptual design plans to link Broyhill Park with Main Street that were developed by the Community Design Assistance Center, College of Architecture and Urban Studies, University of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in concert with BRP&R&L and BRAAC and were directed by Town Council on October 10, 2017. One segment of this involves the rationalization (*e.g.*, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping) of Park Avenue where, of course, the old firehouse is situated. Furthermore, BRP&R&L's budgeted improvements to repair/maintain this building remain unspent in the name of fiscal responsibility pending disposition of the property.

Ms. Jennifer Brown clearly showed at the Town Council meeting on July 10, 2018 that BRP&R&L is utilizing the old firehouse effectively. We believe that if Town Council were to clarify BRP&R&L's management of the property, it will be able to accomplish even more and to achieve greater efficiency as well.

We hope you will consider BRP&R&L's growth and accomplishments as a department and in tandem with BRAAC. These include raising funds for and supporting hanging baskets and planters, intensive and extensive planning for Memorial Park (*e.g.*, trees, sod replacement, Main Street wall, basketball and pickleball courts) and Broyhill Park (*e.g.*, gazebo, fountain, landscaping), to name a few.

We very much appreciate the words that were expressed by each and every Town Council member at the July 10th meeting in support of Town of Blowing Rock's use of the old firehouse by the Town of Blowing Rock. In fairness to the Blowing Rock Village Foundation (BRVF) and so that BRP&R&L and BRAAC can proceed, we recommend that direction be given to BRVF to eliminate the old firehouse from consideration in their plans for a Cultural Arts facility. While Council clearly hinted at this, the door was not closed to BRVF and therefore the figurative keys to the *old* firehouse are not in BRP&R&L's hands.

While BRAAC applauds the BRVF's quest for economic development, we believe that on July 10, 2018 they fell far short of delivering sufficient rationale that had been directed to them by Mayor and Town Council on February 14, 2017, this in spite of being granted a two-month extension from their original twelve-month deadline of May 2018. In conclusion, therefore, we ask that you consider announcing direction at the October 2018 Town Council meeting.

Yours respectfully,

Melissa D. Pickett

Melissa D. Pickett
Chairperson

cc: Mr. Ed Evans