

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
March 12, 2019

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, March 12, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock, N.C. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-tem Albert Yount and Council Members Jim Steele, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Others in attendance were Interim Town Manager Jim Freeman, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman from McGill Associates, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Interim Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Interim Police Chief Aaron Miller, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Building Inspector John Warren, Parks & Recreation Director Jennifer Brown and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, who recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

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

The Pledge of Allegiance

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to adopt the agenda, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Town Volunteer Board Members were recognized for their years of service to the Town of Blowing Rock Boards; Genie Starnes Planning Board (6 years), Bob Miller ABC Board (13 years), Rob Dyer TDA Board (10 years), and Lorry Mulhern TDA Board (3 years).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular meeting held on March 12, 2019 with the following changes: line 215 add a "T" to Dr. Davant's name, line 342 the following amendment to the motion: Council Member Sweeting also requested Council look at the vision for downtown and the vision for 321 Bypass and consider asking experts to help with the vision and line 481 – 483 update the Manager report. Council Member Matheson asked for clarification that the word is "consider" hiring an expert, Council Member Sweeting advised that was correct. Council Member Matheson seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro-Tem Yount made a motion to approve the open and closed minutes for the special meeting held on February 18, 2019, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Tax Release and Refund

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for releases (adjustments and refund). One release and refund totaling \$2,262.84 has been identified for Council approval. **Tax Release and Refund (Hess #2018-09 and #2018-01) – Attachment A**

2. Tax Fee Release

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for releases (adjustments). One release totaling \$430.48 has been identified for Council approval. **Tax Release – (Abbato – #2018-10) Attachment B**

3. Delinquent Tax Advertisement Date Approval – April 18, 2019

Tax Collector Hilari Hubner requested Council approval to advertise delinquent taxes for 2018 taxes on April 18, 2019.

4. AppalCart 2019 Service Agreement

Approval of the AppalCart contract. **AppalCart Service Agreement - Attachment C**

5. Opposing Resolution of SB 179 and HB 278: Unfunded First Responders Retirement Mandate.

NC League recommendation to adopt a Resolution opposing SB 179 and HB 278. **Resolution in Opposition of Senate Bill 179 and House Bill 278 Parity for First Responders - Attachment D**

Mayor Pro-tem Yount made a motion to approve consent agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

Agenda Items:

1. New River Conservancy Presentation – Middle Fork New River Restoration

New River Conservancy Board President George Santucci introduced to Council an upcoming Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant application that could be beneficial to the Town and Middle Fork Greenway. The sought-after grant funding activities would be for a topographic survey, geomorphic assessment and engineer plan development for securing restoration permits.

Mr. Santucci advised they are asking for Blowing Rock to consider a change to the deed reflecting the buffer around that stream will never be altered or touched. He explained for clean water to fund a project like this they need assurance from the Town. Mr. Santucci further advised a letter of intent is an easy way for the Town to show it supports

the project and that it will put the deed restrictions in place with that is necessary when the time comes.

Council Member Sweeting asked how much land they were looking at restricting around the bank. Mr. Santucci stated essentially 50 ft. (less than an acre).

Mayor Sellers advised the best way to handle this is, if Council wishes, make a motion to support and endorse the project. In doing so, that by no means puts the Town under contract because there isn't a contract to be signed. All the Town is stating is approval of support, and it gives the New River Conservancy the ammo to go forth to help get grants.

Mr. Santucci stated he had a letter of intent, for supporting, but was not a legally binding document.

Town Attorney Moseley reviewed the letter of intent and advised it was indeed a letter of support but was not a legally binding document.

Council Member Yount made a motion to approve and sign a letter of intent supporting the project, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

2. Monthly Financial Report

Finance Officer Nicole Norman provided a monthly financial overview for the month end February 2019. Council had no questions or concerns and thanked Ms. Norman for her presentation.

3. FY Audit Firm Proposal and Contract

Finance Officer Nicole Norman advised per Council direction, she had researched and contacted several local government audit firms. Ms. Norman advised staff's recommendation was to accept a three (3) year agreement with Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. Their proposed cost for a three (3) year agreement would be \$23,500 for FY 2019, \$23,500 for FY 2020 and \$24,175 for FY 2021.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the three (3) year contract with Martin Starnes & Associates, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro-Tem Yount stated he felt it should be noted that Martin Starnes & Associates audits around 70% of the North Carolina counties.

4. Septic Tank Truck Bid – Lely Tank

Interim Public Works Director Matt Blackburn advised per Council's direction at the January 8th meeting, staff received formal bids for the septic tank truck. The low bidder was Lely Tank for \$144,024.

Mayor Sellers gave a brief history of the reason behind Council's initial decision to pursue the purchase of the Town's own septic tank truck.

Council discussed the original amount budgeted was \$220,000 with an estimated cost savings of \$76,000. Finance Officer Nicole Norman noted this savings was part of the loan package and would be loan savings, not dollar savings.

Council Member Steele asked if Mr. Blackburn if he foreseen any contingency's on top of the \$144,024 for the truck. Mr. Blackburn advised he did not, the truck will be turn key ready when it is received.

Mayor Pro-tem Yount made a motion to approve the purchase from the low bidder, Lely Tank at a cost of \$144,024, seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

5. Downtown Vision and HWY 321 Bypass/Valley Blvd.

Council Member Sweeting stated she felt what had come out of the ordinance concerns and changes was Town Council's need to create a vision of what they want the downtown and Valley Boulevard to look like. Council Member Sweeting further stated there are currently over ten (10) properties on Valley Boulevard for sale that could be developed. She explained her concern is for Council to get ahead of the game and know what they would like for those two areas to look like. She further explained she knew other people in the community share the concern and that's why she brought it up.

Council Member Sweeting advised one way would be to form a Ad Hoc committee, she recommended that any Council Members who would like to be on it and three (3) Members of the community that Council picks. Council Member Sweeting explained what may come out of the committee is the desire to protect our Town in some other way through other ordinances which would go to Planning Board for consideration.

Council Member Sweeting asked Planning Director Rothrock if he had spoken with any of the names he had recommended. He advised he hadn't he just provided them per request. Council Member Sweeting advised some people were concerned about the financial aspect and some ideas she had for that were; possibly a grant, unused Town revenue or put it in the upcoming budget. She stated those were some ideas she had was just throwing out for Council to think about.

Mayor Sellers stated everyone is rightfully concerned about these areas. He explained the Town has the comprehensive plan that was developed in 2014, that some very knowledgeable people worked on. Mayor Sellers advised it may not be a bad idea to do this committee but would also like to see the Chamber and a few of the individuals whom originally worked on the Comprehensive Plan be involved and let them come up with recommendations for Planning Board and for Planning Board to make their recommendations to Council. He stated he thought Council Member Sweeting has the right idea, but this was just his take on it.

Council Member Matheson stated he wanted to take it a step further, the Town has been doing a Comprehensive Plan update every five (5) years, which the Town is now due for the next update. His thought was to combine this in with the update and stress to whomever helps the two areas of concern. He explained he felt this would be a good time to do this.

Council Member Powell stated she liked Council Member Sweeting's idea of a Ad Hoc committee. She asked Interim Manager Freeman for his opinion on how best to facilitate doing that.

Interim Manager Freeman suggested Council come up with some names and would suggest bringing back to discuss at the next meeting.

Council Member Steele stated he felt it would be best to start off with a small group and develop a plan for the scope of the work and then if it comes to going with a consultant a plan would be started.

Mayor Pro-Tem Yount advised he was concerned since this was now out to the public with a developer coming in and buying real estate to start developing. He further asked Town Attorney Allen Moseley if that was a ligament concern. Mr. Moseley stated he wasn't concerned with that happened. He explained that takes time, effort and money and he didn't feel that is something that could happen so quickly.

Mayor Sellers asked Council Member Sweeting to come up with some ideas of individuals, he stated he would like Planning Director Rothrock on that committee. Council Member Sweeting agreed he would be the staff representative and further asked if any Council Members would like to be on the committee as well. Council Member Steele and Mayor Pro-Tem Yount advised they would like to be. Mayor Pro-tem Yount asked for BRAAC and Planning Board to be represented as well. Mayor Sellers asked Council Member Sweeting to put some names together and bring back to Council and go from there. Council Member Sweeting stated she would involve some of the other Council Members to get suggestions. Interim Manager Freeman advised Council needs to sit down, get the names and get a game plan together first. Council Member Sweeting stated she would spearhead getting started and come back to Council at the next meeting with some ideas.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Sellers briefed Council on the following:

- He read a letter he received from Girl Scout Troop 10004 requesting the sidewalk be repaired on Morris Street near the school. The information has been passed along to staff to look into the matter.
- He advised Rita Moretz from Appalachian Ski Mountain asked the Town to write a Proclamation for Jim Cottrell. Mayer Sellers read the Proclamation and advised he would present it to Mr. Cottrell on behalf of the Town.

Interim Manager Freeman briefed Council on the following:

- Legacy Trail Stairs: Street Access & Railing.....This past March 5th, the Interim Manager and staff met with a number of citizens who were requesting the opening of the closed Legacy Trail Stairs access onto Main Street. After much citizen discussion, the Interim Manager relayed that he will be meeting with the Town's engineer firm on March 7th to assess how best to provide a safe, non-risk access...how best to provide a safe, non-risk access...referencing NCLM Insurance Risk Management February 8th email...anticipate a relocation cost recommendation. Meanwhile, the Interim Manager reported to the citizens that unless NCLM's risks could be mitigated, said present access would remain closed under his tenure.
- One Stop Blowing Rock Election Site Proposal...Please reference County Board of Elections Director Matthew Snyder's email referencing upcoming elections cost for budget purposes and inquiry of adding an additional election site in Town. Per last week's telephone conversation with Director Snyder, he indicated that the former manager conveyed not including another early one stop election site...American Legion & Town Hall. Reasoning due to the length of time such site areas are tied up and American Legion rental/revenue loss. Therefore, he is just again inquiring if the Town would like to reconsider. If so, the site areas would be utilized from October 14th to November 6th. The Interim Manager mentioned he would ask Council. Note Council advised they were not interested in adding an additional One Stop Voting site.
- Wastewater Plant Technical Assistance...Per information and as requested by the Town's ORC, the Town received results/recommendations of a February 21st Technical Assistance Visit. These recommendations are being implemented.
- Sunset Streetscape Project Status...Per information, project contract documents have been executed and a pre-construction meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (Wednesday) morning...engineer, contractor date to actually mobilize/start could be established and later relayed to Council.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:35 Council Member Powell made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.10 (a) (5), seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Council Member Sweeting made a motion to adjourn at 8:15 p.m., seconded by Council Member Steele. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Tax Release and Refund (Hess #2018-09 and #2018-01) – Attachment A

Tax Release – (Abbato – #2018-10) Attachment B

AppalCart Service Agreement - Attachment C

Resolution in Opposition of Senate Bill 179 and House Bill 278 Parity for First Responders - Attachment D

Proclamation for Jim Cottrell – Attachment E