

**MINUTES**  
**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Town Council Special Meeting**  
**September 19, 2019**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council held a special meeting on Thursday, September 19, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Albert Yount, Council Members Jim Steele, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson, and Virginia Powell. Staff present were Town Manager Shane Fox, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, and Planning and Support Specialist Tammy Bentley.

Mayor Sellers called the meeting to order and lead those assembled in The Pledge of Allegiance. The purpose of the meeting was consideration of a planning consulting services contract with Benchmark Planning for Visioning for Valley Boulevard (321 Bypass).

Mayor Sellers asked for public comment prior to the meeting commencing. There was none.

Mr. Rothrock gave the Board an update on the Ad Hoc committee meeting that occurred last week. The committee met with Benchmark regarding the proposal and Mr. Rothrock asked Benchmark to prepare the contract, which he forwarded to the Board yesterday. Mr. Rothrock advised that the tentative public meeting dates were October 15 and 29 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Rothrock said the Ad Hoc committee is tentatively scheduled to meet with Benchmark on 9/29/19. Mr. Rothrock said that the committee requested that Benchmark add an hourly rate to the contract in the event additional services are needed. Benchmark added this to page 5. Mr. Rothrock advised that Town Attorney Allen Moseley had reviewed at the contract.

Council Member Steele asked how the payment process would flow. Mr. Rothrock advised it is a three-phase process; Background and Research \$6,500, Visioning \$5,000, and Prepare and Present the final report, \$8,500.

Council Member Matheson asked how this will affect the next Comprehensive Plan update. Mr. Rothrock advised that this is targeted to Valley Boulevard but goes a step further. Council Member Matheson asked if the cost of the Comprehensive Plan update will be reduced as this will not need to be addressed again. Mr. Rothrock said the cost should be minimal. Mr. Rothrock advised the Board that there are some code revisions necessary to comply with state statutes, adding this will be part of the codification process.

Council Member Powell said she likes having community input and hopes we can use our technology to communicate this opportunity prior to the October meeting to encourage public

participation. Council Member Powell added that she thinks the Council Chambers may be too small.

Council Member Matheson noted that the Blowing Rock School cafeteria was used for the community meetings for the most recent Comprehensive Plan and that had worked well. Council Member Sweeting said that Mr. Fox plans to have a TV for the lobby, in the event of overflow. Council Member Matheson asked if a.m. and p.m. meetings should be offered. Council Member Sweeting said 7:00 p.m. was chosen to allow business owners and seasonal residents an opportunity to attend.

Council Member Powell asked if a meeting should be held on Valley Boulevard. Council Member Steele recommended having the first meeting in the Council Chambers and then move to the American Legion if necessary. Council Member Yount recommended having the American Legion as a back-up. Mr. Fox suggested that the American Legion be reserved for the October meeting dates if it pleases the Council.

Council Member Powell said, with this being such an opportunity to get the community involved, that she hopes Benchmark will not tell the Town what to do. Council Member Sweeting said the Ad Hoc committee has asked Benchmark for visuals and different ways to achieve those views, then ask the Town how to choose. Council Member Sweeting said this will help the Council target funds and efforts towards the goals and then determine what can be done to protect the new corridor through land use codes. Mr. Rothrock advised that Benchmark will provide an assessment of the codes, but that will need to go before the Planning Board before it goes before Town Council.

Council Member Powell asked if there were minutes from the last Ad Hoc meeting that she could read. Mr. Rothrock said he has notes. Mr. Fox said he would get the notes and share with the Council.

Council Member Matheson said that Benchmark was very good at synopsising and adapting the public comment during the Comprehensive Plan process. Mr. Rothrock said the 2013 community-wide survey can included. Council Member Powell said this might help Benchmark.

Council Member Steele asked the date the first report will be presented. Mr. Rothrock advised it will be summarized in January, but the first draft could be available in late November, with the report being finalized in December. Council Member Steele asked Council Member Sweeting if this will happen sometime in December. Council Member Sweeting said the Ad Hoc committee will be following Benchmark closely and the committee will be meeting four times.

Council Member Yount said he had been hearing why the cost is \$20,000 and noted that this will cover from south Main Street to the ETJ. Council Member Yount said this is a lot of area, some of which is topographically challenging. Mayor Sellers said, for the record, he was asked why the Town is spending \$20,000 if there is a Planning Department and Ad Hoc committee. Mayor Sellers asked Mr. Rothrock to clarify how Benchmark can further enhance the Town's ability for growth

on Valley Boulevard. Mr. Rothrock said he thinks it a good idea to have a professional with ‘fresh eyes’ to take public comment and develop a vision and evaluate the codes.

Ms. Betsy Wilcox, of 460 Green Hill Circle, asked if reverse 911 can be used for notification of the meetings. Mr. Fox confirmed. Ms. Wilcox said she thinks this a good idea and advised the announcement to be promotional in tone. Ms. Wilcox asked how much control the Town has over private property. Council Member Powell said zoning codes are our only control. Mr. Rothrock and Council Member Matheson concurred.

Council Member Steele made a motion to accept the Benchmark Planning Consulting Contract, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Council Member Powell made a motion to adjourn at 6:30 p.m., seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Charlie Sellers**

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Tammy Bentley**  
**Planning & Zoning Support Specialist**

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Benchmark Planning Contract for Visioning for Valley Boulevard**