

**Town of Blowing Rock  
Town Council 2018 Annual Retreat  
January 6, 7 & 8, 2020**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their annual retreat on Monday, January 6, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. at BRAHM, Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting, Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Also present were Town Manager Shane Fox, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Fire Chief Kent Graham and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, whom recorded the minutes.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Sellers called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, January 6<sup>th</sup> and welcomed everyone. Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to open the meeting, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

**Review of January and June 2019 Retreat Topics:**

Manager Fox gave a review of the 2019 Council Retreat goals and what has been accomplished as well as still an ongoing process.

**Financial Items:**

**FY Budgetary Overview & Projections**– Finance Officer Nicole Norman reviewed mid-year financial reports with the board and explained this is an early review. Ms. Norman explained the budgetary projections were very conservative but felt the Town finances were in good shape. Ms. Norman gave an update to the debt service and provided a status summary review for each phase of the Bond including allocation of those funds in the various stages. Council discussed options to work toward a reserve fund for resident areas asking for sewer. Council also suggested a reserve account for sidewalk repairs.

**Debt & Bond Overview** – The Town’s current Auditor, Misty Watson CPA, has taken a full-time position with Watauga County and will no longer be available to finish her audit contract with the Town. Council discussed, and the consensus was to have staff contact the previous Audit Firm, Combs, Tennant and Carpenter to get a three-year informal proposal and report back to Council at the February meeting.

**Fund Balance Discussion** – Staff updated Council on the current status of the acceptance of credit cards for payment. Council discussed whether or not the Town should absorb the approximate 2% cost of accepting credit cards as a method of payment or charge a fee to the consumer each time. The consensus among Council was to get a

proposal from the software company to add an automatic fee to the consumer for use of credit cards.

**Capital Budget Reserves Review** – Council discussed and reviewed the AMI Meter pros and cons. The vendor the Town has been working with for the trial period is not necessarily the only option the Town has. Council requested staff get an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) from several other companies and bring back to Council for review.

### **Revenue Enhancement: Water/Sewer Rate Structure -**

#### **Administrative Items:**

**Board Appointments** - Council reviewed and briefly discussed the applicants for the Volunteer Board appointments. The Board appointments will be discussed further, voted on and appointed at the February Council Meeting.

Council recessed at 12:00 p.m. for lunch.

#### **Planning Update:**

**2014 Comprehensive Plan Update** – Town Engineer Doug Chapman reviewed with Council the estimated bid results for the Sunset Street Scape. The bid is approximately \$1 million dollars over budget. Council discussed cost cutting options. Several Council Members advised they felt this street was a disgrace to our Town and the repairs are very much needed and needs to be done right. The sewer issue on Ransom and Sunset was also discussed and Council asked Mr. Chapman to look at incorporating that piece into the project. Council discussed with staff funding options to bridge the gap between the bid and the estimated cost, which has been budgeted. The consensus was for Mr. Chapman to review and present to Council at the February meeting.

**2021 General Statute Changes/Code Amend. (75% Green Space, Parking Credit, Code Amendments, Town Center Design Standards, 28 Day STR, Conditional Zoning/CUP discussion, Ad Hoc Up -**

#### **Organizational Update –**

**Police Department** – Planning Director Kevin Rothrock briefly gave Council an update to the project.

At 5:55 p.m. Council recessed for the evening.

On Tuesday, January 7th at 8:30 a.m., the meeting was reconvened. Those present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting, Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Staff present were Town Manager Shane Fox, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn,

Police Chief Aaron Miller, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Town Engineer Doug Chapman from McGill and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, whom recorded the minutes.

### **Public Works & Public Utilities:**

**2020 Street Paving** – Council briefly discussed the pros and cons to having a public dog park in Town. The idea was dismissed due to various factors including cost, maintenance and liability.

**Water Plant Capital Planning** – Mr. Rothrock updated Council on the status of the utility work on the 321 Project. Ms. Brown reviewed NCDOT's landscape plan with Council and reminded Council NCDOT will maintain for 18 months. Council discussed coming up with a plan on how to maintain this project once the 18-month warranty is up. It was discussed that trees can't be put in the median because there are utility lines running down the center median which have a concrete seal over them. Council discussed options for preparing for the possibility of hiring new personal for landscape maintenance along Hwy 321. The possibility of contracting out was also discussed and Council asked staff to include that pricing in when this is discussed again in the near future.

### **Wastewater Plant Capital Planning –**

**Infrastructure Capital Planning (PRV's, AMI, Expansion)** - Interim Manager Freeman advised Council had requested an updated plan. Council Member Steele advised he brought this up because of what happened in CA with the wildfires and wanted to make sure the Town did have a plan in place. Council discussed the ambulance as well.

### **Parks and Recreation:**

**Memorial Park Discussion (Playground Capital Planning, Bathrooms Capital Planning, Other Areas, 1888 Museum Request)** – Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown reviewed with Council proposed improvements for Memorial Park. Those included; renovation and/or extension to the bathrooms, resurfacing the tennis courts, replacement of the retaining wall behind the tennis courts, renovating the volleyball court and replacement of the current playground. Ms. Brown reminded that Sam Hess and Sam Glover, who spoke at the December Council meeting, would like to be a part of the playground replacement process. Council discussed in length and felt replacement of the playground was a high priority. The consensus of Council was to do a detailed Master Plan before making a decision on how to proceed with the other improvement areas of Memorial Park.

The meeting recessed from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

Council discussed the 1888 Museum repairs that are needed to the structure.

**Parks and Recreation (Pickleball Discussion, Legion Hill/Broyhill Lake Access Discussion, Broyhill Lake/Dam Discussion) –** Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown discussed some options

Manager Fox presented a conceptual plan from the

### **Tourism and Transportation**

**Sidewalk Discussion and Capital Plan–** Council discusses with Interim Police Chief Aaron Miller the SRO (School Resource Officer) and options for approaching the county to help with funding that position. The future of the contract with Watauga County for the Town's dispatch services was also discussed. Mr. Miller advised he was content with the county continuing the 911 service but would like to bring the dispatch service back to Blowing Rock. Council directed staff to work on getting some numbers together to better make a determination. This will need to be revisited before June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Crosswalks Discussion and Capital Plan –** Council discussed various option for helping resolve the parking issue. Interim Police Chief Miller discussed doing a survey to get the Public's thoughts on paid parking. Council discussed the private/public partnership for parking solutions.

**Parking Discussion (Additional, Management and Paid Parking) –** Council discussed at length various options for parking including offsite parking options, paid parking meters, better enforcement etc. Council consensus was to continue work towards a better way of enforcement before moving forward discussing other options.

**Parades (4<sup>th</sup> of July and Christmas) –** Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown advised two parades a year are sponsored by the Town, July 4<sup>th</sup> and Christmas. Currently both are held at 2:00 in the afternoon. Ms. Brown advised

### **Potpourri Discussions:**

**Mayor's Term Discussion –** Manager Fox briefly discussed with Council some options for the Mayo's term. He explained

**Energy Efficiency –** Council discussed several options and agreed the Town currently works hard to conserve energy where they can. It was the consensus of all that focusing more attention on energy efficient vehicles was a better money saving priority than the use of solar panels for Town owned buildings.

The meeting was recessed at 6:00 p.m.

On Wednesday, January 8th at 8:30 a.m., the meeting was reconvened. Those present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting, Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Staff present were Town Manager Shane Fox, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock,

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Fire Chief Kent Graham and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, whom recorded the minutes.

Council, Manager and staffed worked on developing a priority summary of items in which they wish to accomplish. Council determined the top five items for staff to start working toward accomplishing in the next 6 months. The entire summary will be reviewed by staff to determine which department will be working on the priority item and a revised summary will be given to Council at the February meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

NONE

**ADJOURN**

At 2:00 p.m. with no further business to discuss Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**Charlie Sellers, Mayor**

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk**