

DRAFT
MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Annual Departmental Meeting
March 16, 2016

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council continued their annual departmental meetings on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. in the Parks & Recreation Center located at 145 Park Avenue, 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 Scott Fogleman, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

JOINT MEETING WITH THE TDA

TDA Members present were Dean Bullis, Doug Matheson, Ex-Officio Members Scott Fogleman and Nicole Norman, Staff Members, Tracy Brown and Amanda Lugenbell. New TDA member Lorry Mulhern was also present.

TDA Director Brown gave a power point presentation (Attachment A) to those in attendance. He began by saying the Blue Ridge Parkway was voted number one out of 368 national parks and was the number one driver in bringing visitors to our area.

Mr. Brown also stated that a survey was sent to all tourism related businesses in Town which showed a 65% increase in business over the previous year.

Mr. Brown gave a brief budget overview stating expenses were divided into 5 categories: Tourism Infrastructure, Administrative, Direct Tourism Promotion, Central Services, and Support to Organized Groups. The largest portions of TDA funding being appropriated toward Town infrastructure items include parking decks, signage, Wi-Fi and direct tourism promotion, such as advertising, visitor center, and public relations.

Marketing and Advertising were also discussed. Mr. Brown explained that co-op advertising allowed the TDA to stretch their advertising dollars by partnering with other entities like the High Country Host and Visit North Carolina.

Website and social media had seen a 20% increase in users and 252% increase in mobile sessions. Mr. Brown advised their Facebook page currently had 30,000 fans and Blowing Rock's Instagram feed attracted 1,300 followers in 2015.

In 2015, visits and calls to the Visitor Center had seen a slight decrease; however, 36,582 visitor guides had been distributed. There had been 87 negative weather days this past year.

Mr. Brown advised in 2015, Blowing Rock had been featured in Our State Magazine, NC Business, The New York Times, etc. and had also been mentioned on national television during the CBS Sunday Morning program.

In closing, Mr. Brown mentioned that the TDA was getting bids for electronic counters for the parking decks in Town.

Council thanked Mr. Brown for his presentation.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Jones began his update to Council regarding the issue of repeat parking ticket offenders. He advised after personally speaking with Mr. Sukow at Blowing Rock School, the problem with teachers parking on Sunset Drive had been remedied. He also stated that he thought there was a misconception of who was parking on Main Street. There had been only five repeat offenders in 2015.

Chief Jones talked about overnight parking enforcement. He advised a Town Ordinance would need to be generated in order to enforce the issue. Council recommended that Town Attorney Moseley review the matter regarding overnight parking on Town property only.

Chief Jones also spoke briefly regarding complaints he had received regarding speeding in certain areas.

In closing, Chief Jones stated that he felt things were going smoothly in the Police Department. Council Member Matheson commended the Police Department on their foot patrol and their home-check program. Chief Jones explained if residents signed up for the home-check program, the Police Department would check their homes at least once a day while they were away for the season. Council agreed this was a great service offered to Blowing Rock residents.

FIRE/RESCUE SERVICES

Fire Chief Kent Graham advised the call volume for the previous year had increased. He updated Council on the status of an ambulance base in Blowing Rock.

Chief Graham advised the Blowing Rock Fire District had luckily not experienced any large fire losses in the past year. He advised public education efforts remained strong and cooking fires remained the largest reason for house fires.

Chief Graham also spoke regarding increased training requirements for employees as well as volunteer firefighters. Fire Chief Graham stated with the plans to build a third fire substation in the Aho area, their department would need at least 36 active members on the roster. He suggested instead of hiring 6 full-time employees, a greater number of part-time employees be hired to meet these needs. Funding sources were also briefly discussed.

Fire Chief Graham stated their ultimate goal was to continue offering Blowing Rock residents the highest level of service they could.

OTHER

Town Manager Fogleman asked Council for their feedback on the following items presented to them during the previous night's meeting.

Council agreed to the Median Agreement with NCDOT near the Parkway Bridge on Highway 321 in the amount of \$86,000.

Council decided the best lighting option along Valley Boulevard would be to go with LED lighting.

Council felt the best option for the gateway entrance at the intersection of Sunset Drive and Valley Boulevard would be a 2-foot rock wall with a circular "Welcome to Blowing Rock" letters on the wall. The current sign located at the Chetola entrance should be moved to the median near the Parkway Bridge, if allowed by the Parkway and NCDOT. The sign, currently located at the south entrance to Blowing Rock, should remain at its current location.

Council agreed to Level 3 of the paver options presented, in the estimated amount of \$22,940. This option included labor, materials etc. to install pavers at seven intersections along the widening project which would be at Tanger/Possum Hollow, North Main, West Cornish, Sunset Drive, Church Street, Ransom Street, and South Main St. The direct cost anticipated to achieve this initiative is \$17,900.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

MAYOR _____ **ATTEST** _____
J.B. Lawrence **Sharon Greene, Town Clerk**

Attachments

TDA Annual Report Power Point Presentation- Attachment A