

Draft
MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
January 9, 2018

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, January 9, 2018, 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 Town Manager Ed Evans, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Public Works and Utilities Director Mike Wilcox, Fire Chief Kent Graham, 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.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND REPORTS

Mayor Sellers read a Resolution of Appreciation for long-time resident Ginny Stevens.
Resolution of Appreciation for Ginny Stevens - Attachment A

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve the minutes for the regular meeting on December 12, 2017 with the following correction: The nomination of Mayor Pro-tem Yount was not unanimous, Council Members: Steele, Matheson, Powell and incumbent Mayor Pro-Tem Yount were for the motion, Council Member Sweeting did not vote. Manager Evans pointed out a non-vote is an affirmative vote. Council Member Sweeting advised she would still like the minutes to reflect she did not vote. Council Member Matheson seconded the correction. In favor of the motion; Council Member Sweeting, Matheson, Steele and Powell. Against; Mayor Pro-Tem Yount.

CONSENT AGENDA

Town Manager Evans presented the following consent agenda items:

- 1. Watauga County – Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution**

A resolution was presented for adoption for the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose to the resolution is to adopt a plan of how to move forward in the event of a natural or manmade disaster. If this resolution were not to be adopted it would affect the Town in terms of not being eligible to receive FEMA or State Funds in the event of such a disaster.

Watauga County Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution – Attachment B

2. Tax Release – David Stevens

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for releases (adjustments). One (1) tax release totaling \$2,105.67 has been identified for Council approval.

Council Member Matheson asked if the Hazard Mitigation Resolution is to replace one that had previously been done several years back. Manager Evans advised this was an updated plan, but needs to be adopted as a separate document.

Council Member Sweeting asked why Fire Chief Graham wasn't the contact person. Manager Evans explained it's administered through the County, therefore the County Emergency Management is the contact. Council Member Sweeting further asked why Fire Chief Graham was not in attendance of any of the meetings regarding this. Fire Chief Graham explained this was a mitigation and not hazard response and he hadn't attended any of the meetings lately. Fire Chief Graham further explained he was a part of helping with the original draft plan years ago, but wasn't a part of this revised plan.

Council Member Sweeting made a motion to approve Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Yount. Unanimously approved. **Tax Release – Attachment C**

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Draft Ordinance to Increase Flag Pole Height

Manager Evans advised there had been a request from Town staff to consider an increase in height of ground-mounted flag poles. The current ordinance limits flag poles to twenty (20) feet above ground. Some have commented that twenty (20) feet is too short to display an American flag of any adequate size. Also, to display a group of three (3) poles, with one flag pole prominence at twenty (20) feet, the other two (2) poles would be fifteen (15) feet tall. It has been suggested that freestanding flag pole height be increased to thirty (30) feet. As a note, the flag pole in front of Town Hall is thirty (30) feet in height.

Council Member Sweeting asked for clarification that this had been approved by Planning Board at their last meeting. Manager Evans advised it had been approved.

Council Member Matheson pointed out the flag pole located in front of Town Hall is already thirty (30) feet.

Council Member Powell stated she wanted to make sure this request was only regarding flags and not other signs around Town "growing". Manager Evans clarified this change

is only to the flag pole height. Council Member Steele made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro-Tem Yount made a motion to accept the change of the flag pole height to thirty (30) feet with a stipulation that the thirty (30) foot pole be reserved for the American Flag. Seconded by Council Member Matheson. Manager Evans advised he needed to clarify that if the thirty (30) foot pole is going to be reserved for the American Flag, is the Town going to need a separate ruling on how high any other poles can be. Manager Evans further advised he would suggest any additional flags, other than the American Flag, should be twenty-five (25) feet in height.

Council Member Powell asked for clarification, this request is only for flags not banners. Manager Evans advised she was correct.

Manager Evans explained getting specific on the type of flag that is assigned to a pole is touching on the freedom of speech issue and asked Attorney Mosley to weigh in his thoughts. Attorney Mosley advised the item at hand is to decide on changing the height from twenty (20) feet to thirty (30) feet and that is it. There is no other issue other than the height change at this hearing.

Mayor Pro-Tem Yount amended his motion to accept the flag pole change from twenty (20) feet to thirty (30) feet, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

New Business

1. Audit Presentation for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 – Misty Watson

Misty Watson thanked Council for allowing her the opportunity to provide audit services to the Town. Ms. Watson reviewed a few bullet points including the following: the assets of the Town exceeded its liabilities for all Governmental and Enterprise Funds at June 30, 2017 by thirty-one million dollars, which was an increase of \$831,000 from the previous fiscal year. Ms. Watson advised a few of the reasons for the increase were due to increase in revenues above market expectations which was primarily the local options sales tax, sales and services were larger than budget, water and sewer charges were higher than expected and the Town continues to closely monitor expenditures for all funds. Ms. Watson further advised the property tax collection rate was 99.15% for the fiscal year (FY) and the unassigned fund balance for the general fund was a little over three million or 47% for the FY.

Ms. Watson explained the water and sewer fund increased a little over \$18,000 for the FY. Ms. Watson advised the Town total debt decreased a little over \$661,000, which was due to new loan proceeds (installment loan) and the total principal payments for all funds were a little over \$973,000 for the FY. She further explained that depreciation for the Town added \$3.5 million in the general fund and \$1.6 million in the water/sewer fund. Those projects included purchases of a few new vehicles, ditch line repair, road failure repairs, culvert replacements, repaving of the Town streets and sidewalks and various other projects.

Ms. Watson advised her report was an unmodified opinion which is a clean opinion.

Council Member Powell asked if the audit would be put online for the public to view. Manager Evans advised it would be.

Council Member Matheson asked if it is Ms. Watson's opinion that the financial statements, contracts and disclosures adequately described, support the Town's goal of transparency. Ms. Watson advised it was, and that everything in this audit was very transparent. Manager Evans stated that the LGC makes certain that the audit is prepared in a way that is transparent.

Council Member Matheson asked if Ms. Watson found or detected any material weakness in the audit. Ms. Watson advised she did not, and if there would have been any they would have been listed.

Council Members briefly discussed bringing the unassigned fund balance back up to the 50% range.

Council Member Matheson thanked Ms. Watson and Finance Officer Nicole Norman for their hard work on the audit.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to accept the audit seconded by Council Member Sweeting. Unanimously approved. **Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Audit – Attachment D**

Manager's Report

- Mayor Sellers and Council members Matheson, Sweeting, and Powell will be attending either the UNC School of Government, "Essentials of Municipal Government" or "Leadership" course in Hickory on January 11 and 12.
- The Town Council will be participating in a Council Retreat in Asheville at the Doubletree Inn on January 14 from 1pm to 5pm, January 15 from 8am to 5pm, and January 16, from 8am to noon.

Council Member Powell asked Manager Evans what the Double Tree said about streaming live. Manager Evans advised it was going to be very costly to stream live approximately \$500 to \$1,000 dollars a day depending on how it is done. Council Member Powell asked if they have WiFi. Manager Evans advised they do, but you may not be able to stream video on WiFi. Council Member Powell asked if it could be recorded and put on YouTube. Manager Evans advised that would have to be a Council decision. After brief discussion Council Member Powell made a motion to record the meeting and put on YouTube to provide transparency, seconded by Council Member Sweeting. For the motion: Council Members Powell, Sweeting and Matheson. Against: Council Member Steele and Mayor Pro-Tem Yount. Motion passed.

- The TDA contracted with the Magellan Strategy Group to have a profile study done of Blowing Rock. The Presentation is available to Council.
- Ed will be attending the NC City/County Manager’s Association Annual Winter Conference on January 31 – February 2.
- Hilari Hubner will be attending the “City and County Clerks Academy and Institute in Chapel Hill on January 17.
- The following employees have reached career service milestones in the past year or in January of this year:

Sharon VanDyke – 20 years	Mark Presnell – 15 years
Linda Steen – 15 years	Nicole Norman – 10 years
Aaron Miller – 10 years	Sterling Lewis – 10 years
James Townsend – 10 years	

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution of Appreciation for Ginny Stevens - Attachment A**
- Watauga County Hazard Mitigation Plan Resolution – Attachment B**
- Tax Release – Attachment C**
- Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Audit – Attachment D**