

**MINUTES-SPECIAL MEETING
BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 6, 2015**

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, at 8:50 a.m. in the Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road. Mayor Andy Ball presided. Council members present were Mayor Pro-Tem Rennie Brantz, Lynne Mason, Fred Hay, Jennifer Peña and Quint David (arrived at 9:12 a.m.). Staff members present were Town Manager John Ward, Town Clerk Christine Pope, Assistant to the Manager Jim Byrne and Administrative Support Specialist Nicole Worley.

The purpose of the meeting was to hold the Town Council's annual retreat.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Council Member Peña, seconded by Council Member Brantz, Council moved to adopt the agenda as presented.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

TOWN-WIDE COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Town Charter:

Town Manager John Ward presented Council with a copy of Chapter 30: Town Council of the Town's Code of Ordinances and pointed out the agenda-portion of the chapter which relates to meetings. Mr. Ward advised that he is working with staff to ensure Council is provided with more detailed information on the action request forms for consideration at their regular meeting. Council Member Mason stated she would like to move away from items being added to the regular meetings after the Council meeting packet is published unless it is an unforeseeable circumstance. Mr. Ward advised that there is the possibility of including a "how-to" form in front of the action request form available on the Town's Web site to make the process for submitting items clearer.

Agenda Development/Meetings/Agenda Presentation:

Town Manager John Ward provided an overview of how staff are working to make the regular Council meeting agenda more efficient and detailed by including budget adjustments with the accompanying projects among other things. He advised that by making sure the information is available, the agenda-setting meeting might not be necessary. Council Member Peña stated she has been pleased with the last two meetings without an agenda-setting meeting prior, adding that she didn't feel rushed or that information was missing. Council Member Mason agreed, stating that if a good process is in place, the agenda-setting meeting would not be necessary. She added that she would like Council to be doing less committee work. Mr. Ward advised that should any Council member have a concern regarding an agenda item, he would respond to that concern and copy the entire Council on his response to ensure everyone was in the loop. Council came to the

consensus that they would like to move forward with one meeting per month and eliminate the agenda-setting meeting.

Mr. Ward also presented to Council a meeting management program that the Town of Jefferson, Ga. uses that allows the public and Council to view each agenda item, provides a more efficient way to put the agenda together, saves staff time, and also has unlimited storage to keep past packets and minutes available for inspection. He added that the program Jefferson uses also has video streaming capabilities for the Town Council meetings. He stated that should Council want to move toward this, they would put it out to bid. Mr. Ward added that in addition to implementing this type of program, by providing Council with tablets, it would save additional staff time by not having to work on printing, binding and delivering the meeting packets. Council members were in agreement that they would like to see a program like this implemented.

Mr. Ward advised Council that in addition to an agenda-setting program, the administrative department hopes to upgrade their Laserfiche program within the existing year's budget in order to give staff the ability to word-search for Council members and the public if looking for past minutes and discussions. He added that with unlimited storage, staff could also include other boards such as the Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission minutes at no additional cost to the Town. Town Clerk Christine Pope advised that the current Laserfiche system has the minutes back to 1980 that can be searched by term.

Mr. Ward showed a rendering of the Food Lion in Jefferson that was converted to the city's library, police station and meeting space for Council to keep in mind if moving toward a government complex.

Mr. Ward talked briefly about the monthly reports included in the regular meeting packets, which could be included in the quarterly reports. Council expressed their consensus to remove these reports from the regular meeting agenda and to include this information in the quarterly reports. Council Member David noted that good public relations are provided by including these reports. Mr. Ward advised that his Town Manager Update portion of the agenda will include highlighting projects completed and work being done.

Communications/Information Distribution/Press Releases:

Town Manager John Ward advised Council that an e-mail link has been created for anyone who wants to send an e-mail to all Council members and the mayor which is available on the Town's Web site. He added that he hopes Council will hold off on funding a new position to oversee communications and public relations, in order to give him and staff an opportunity to work on this, noting that he believes staff can work to satisfy Council's request for this with the additional time that will be saved by having a meeting management program. He used the parking meter announcement as an example, stating it will be sent to a media listserv, will be available online, and he hopes to have a press release page on the Web site for anyone to look over past press releases as well. Brief discussion ensued regarding a process to determine what will and will not need a press release. Mr. Ward also pointed out that there are groups trying to provide the Town with a video highlighting the Town, but then tries to sell advertising. He suggested Council consider utilizing an internship program and working with local groups and the university to make these types of videos and other outlets for highlighting Boone.

Mayor Ball declared a break at 10 a.m. Council reconvened at 10:13 a.m.

Mayor Ball noted that the discussion of priorities will be held off until the Friday, Feb. 13 retreat meeting since some Council members need to leave early.

Existing Budget Update/Future Budget Development:

Town Manager John Ward presented Council with a document showing revenue collection figures and where departments currently stand **(Handout permanently on file in February 2015 meeting file)**. He noted the following items:

- Collection percentages show change (sales tax, Powell Bill) due to change in state distributions.
- Anticipated parking revenue is coming in lower than expected. Council Member Mason noted that this may be due to the timeline of execution of parking meters, which was anticipated to start at an earlier date.
- Overage on insurance for certain departments: Mr. Ward noted that different categories were assigned for different departments depending on their individual needs.
- Paving/Streets and Powell Bill funds: Mr. Ward advised that these do not show expenditures. He added that the reorganized Public Works Department will work to get the best funding by combining projects in the future. He added that there were delays this past year for good reason, but Council will begin to see an increase in projects and a great deal of activity in the spring. He stated that they are also beginning to implement cross-training in order to develop a process for succession.
- Howard Street Project: Mr. Ward noted that staff will be formulating a presentation for Council utilizing new traffic studies and other documentation.
- Mr. Ward advised that a roundabout may be presented for the intersection of Rivers and Water streets.

Council Member Mason asked that any press releases be forwarded to other local elected officials as well moving forward.

Mr. Ward presented a breakdown of the Fund Balance Analysis for the end of the fiscal year **(Handout permanently on file in the February 2015 meeting file)**. He stated that last year, Council appropriated \$3.6 million, but this year will only have approximately \$2.6 million to work with. He suggested that moving forward, Council be cautious with adding to the budget. Mayor Ball noted that the state may be putting a bill into motion that will remove state income tax and become a consumption tax at sale, which could benefit the Town if it comes back to the local municipalities. Council Member Mason asked that the fund balance analysis information be given to Council as part of the quarterly reports with a brief update during the manager's monthly report at meetings as well.

Existing Services/Town Department Feedback:

Town Manager John Ward stated he has been going to area businesses and speaking with local groups regarding any areas of concern or opportunities for better efficiency and asked that Council advise him of any concerns they might have as well. Council Member David stated he heard concerns about issues falling through the cracks over the past year, and would like to see this improve. Mr. Ward stated he intends to include on the Town's Web site a service request

link for each department and for follow-up to be completed by the departments as well. Brief discussion ensued regarding the status of the wayfinding/gateway signs program presented to Council by the NCDOT. Assistant to the Manager Jim Byrne stated that initial estimates indicate a \$50,000-75,000 price range for the design portion alone by an engineering firm. Mr. Ward stated he would work with staff to determine the best way to proceed. Council Member David also spoke regarding ASU's Student Government Association wanting to be more involved in Town committees. Mr. Ward stated he has a meeting scheduled with the SGA president in order to start this discussion.

ADMINISTRATION

Town Manager John Ward provided a brief summary of the accomplishments over the past year for the Administration Department. He suggested that some priorities for the coming year be Town Hall signage, repair and maintenance at Town Hall, the upgrade of the Laserfiche program and purchase of a meeting management system. Discussion also ensued regarding bringing Jim Byrne's position away from the housing authority and becoming part of the Administration Department. Assistant to the Manager Jim Bryne advised that the housing authority was initially created because their jurisdiction would reach up to 10 miles outside the Town limits; however, there are no longer any benefits to having this anymore. It was the consensus of the Council that staff should move toward implementing this reorganization and bringing Mr. Byrne's position under administration.

Mayor Ball declared a break at 11:38 a.m. Council reconvened at 11:45 a.m.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources Director Peri Moretz provided a brief summary of the accomplishments from the previous year and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Discussion ensued regarding team-building activities, upgrades to the Town's fitness equipment/room and alcohol testing. Mayor Ball noted it would be better to do something little than nothing at all to upgrade the fitness room. Ms. Moretz also advised her staff are working to find ways to partner with other government entities to purchase alcohol testing equipment and would also look into possible payroll deductible discounts for local gyms and the wellness center.

Mayor Ball declared a lunch break at 12 p.m. Council reconvened at 12:40 p.m.

POLICE

Police Chief Dana Crawford provided a brief summary of the accomplishments from the previous year and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. He noted that without consistent placement of officers throughout the area, violations such as no leashes on dogs, drugs, noise, and other issues occur. Chief Crawford stated that, not including the Town-sponsored downtown events, his police officers monitor more than 40 events per year. He added that with the increase in population of the Town and ASU, beer sales, and the introduction of liquor by the drink all happening in the past 25 years, his police force has not increased to help offset those new issues. Council Member David stated he would like to see a long-term growth plan to properly

accommodate the changes of Boone. Discussion ensued regarding mental health services offered to Town police officers through the Employee Assistance Program, the need for a vehicle replacement program that could potentially offset the cost of purchasing vehicles by saving on repair and maintenance, and funding allocated to renovate the Blowing Rock building that houses the police department. Assistant to the Manager Jim Bryne advised that the roof of the building must be replaced if nothing else, and the funds originally budgeted would not cover all renovations discussed. It was the consensus of the Council that staff provide them with cost estimates for various renovation options to determine what to move forward with in a “pick and choose” manner. Council Member Mason wondered if it would be better at this point to consolidate dispatch. Mayor Ball stated that, given the recommendation received, it would be best not to continue in that direction at this time.

FIRE

Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs provided a brief summary of the accomplishments from the previous year and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Chief Isaacs stated the main issue is training employees who then leave for other departments. He felt that, in addition to the new title changes to allow for employment growth, a pay study and possible pay increase could be the next phase in keeping these employees from receiving their training then moving to a different department. Town Manager John Ward also noted that the significant density increases coming, including Rivers Walk and the multi-use development in the old Library lot, will affect the fire department as well. Chief Isaacs stated that over the next five to ten years, he hopes to see a fourth fire station built near the Bamboo/New River intersection and another person 24 hours per day at Fire Station #1. Brief discussion ensued regarding the fitness room. Mr. Ward wondered if they would qualify for help from the health department as a wellness issue.

Chief Isaacs also advised Council that they anticipate the new Town Web site to be online the next week.

Council Member Peña left the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Upon questioning, Chief Isaacs informed Council that he expected it would cost approximately \$20,000 to upgrade the equipment for video streaming the Council meetings.

Mayor Ball declared a break at 2:09 p.m. Council reconvened at 2:25 p.m.

FINANCE

Finance Director Amy Davis provided a brief summary of the accomplishments from the previous year and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Ms. Davis also advocated for the cleaning of the duct work and replacing of the flooring at Town Hall. Discussion ensued regarding the annual maintenance cost of \$21,000 for the Planning and Inspections Department software originally chosen. Town Manager John Ward advised Council that he will be working with staff to review options and will report back to them. Council briefly discussed how to balance the short-term space needs for various departments while still looking toward a longer-term goal.

Council Member David spoke regarding the Sustainability Task Force's interest in exploring crowd-funding and having a green fund donation option on water utility bills. Ms. Davis suggested having a separate pamphlet available with utility bills for anyone who would like to donate toward that, and indicated she would be happy to meet with Council Member David to discuss this further.

Town Manager John Ward asked Council if they had ever tried to collect the unpaid parking tickets other than boots. Council advised that they have not. Mr. Ward noted that moving away from validation stamps could produce approximately \$60,000 and another \$60,000 could come from outstanding parking tickets within the legal collectible time frame of three years.

(All Departmental Reports are permanently on file in the February 2015 Annual Retreat Packet.)

ADJOURN

Upon a motion by Council Member Brantz, seconded by Council Member David, Council moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:52 p.m.

VOTE: Aye – All
 Nay – None

Christine Pope, Town Clerk

Andy Ball, Mayor