# MINUTES – WORKSHOP/RETREAT
# BOONE TOWN COUNCIL
# February 16, 2016

## CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Boone Town Council was called to order at 8:42 a.m. in the Council Chambers located at 1500 Blowing Rock Road. Mayor Rennie Brantz presided. Council members present were Mayor Pro Tem Lynne Mason, Loretta Clawson, Charlotte Mizelle, Jennifer Teague and Jeannine Underdown Collins. Staff present included Town Manager John Ward, Assistant Town Manager Jim Byrne, Town Clerk Christine Pope and Administrative Support Specialist Nicole Worley. Finance Director Amy Davis, Human Resources Director Peri Moretz, Police Chief Dana Crawford, Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs and Planning Director Bill Bailey also attended the meeting as needed.

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

## TOWN-WIDE COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Town Manager John Ward began the meeting by advising Council only one item from last year's retreat remained to be accomplished, which was the sign for the front of Town Hall. He noted he would present Council with a design later in the meeting. Mr. Ward also introduced Rain Thoresen, his newest intern from Appalachian State University.

### AGENDA DEVELOPMENT/MEETINGS/AGENDA PRESENTATION

Mr. Ward announced that 284 agenda items were addressed in 2015, significantly above what the Town has done in the past. He stated that using the new online meeting management system has contributed greatly toward this, with significant cost savings on copy, paper and time, which has resulted in 50% less time in meetings. Mr. Ward stated that the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment are also in the process of moving toward full use of this meeting management system as well. Brief discussion ensued regarding the success of the meeting management system, and Mayor Brantz requested that links to older meeting minutes for the same issues be added to agenda items in the future.

### COMMUNICATIONS/INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ward advised Council that he is working toward sending out multiple press releases each month in order to provide better communication regarding designations, accomplishments and other items related to the community. He added that the new intern, Rain, will be assisting him in finding new communication methods to reach out to the large population that does not read the newspaper. Council voiced their appreciation for Mr. Ward's Friday updates. Mayor Brantz requested that the Town see if it's possible to make the town calendar more visible on the Town's Web site home page. Brief discussion ensued regarding the possibility of a Mayor's blog or other site for the Town to post updates. Mr. Ward asked Council to consider revising the public hearing process for zoning map and text amendments from a quarterly basis to monthly, which would be discussed in more detail during the Planning Department's time during the retreat.

### EXISTING BUDGET UPDATE/FUTURE BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ward provided the new Council members with an overview of the budget planning process. He stated that there was a decrease of $453,000 in debt load this past year and a net position increase of $3.2 million, a majority of which accounts for the rate structure through water and sewer to make the debt payment on the water intake project. Mr. Ward advised that he does not anticipate a rate increase for water and sewer for the intake project, noting that he expects the current rate structure will cover the USDA loan payments. He added that this project does not just cover a new intake site, but also repairs and maintenance to the existing system.

Discussion ensued regarding the current water bill adjustments the Town is approving for leaks, which totaled approximately $70,000 in the past year. Council was in consensus that Mr. Ward should revise the hardship policy to better identify what leaks should be considered for adjustments and which are the responsibility of the water customer as well as the possibility of adjustment amount limits. Mr. Ward added that an energy audit is being performed to see where the Town can be more energy efficient, and the Town will need to upgrade the public utilities metering system in the near future. Council was also in consensus that they would like to begin receiving a budget summary of revenues and expenses on a quarterly basis moving forward. Mr. Ward advised

Council he would get them a water and sewer rate comparison with like towns in North Carolina as well. Brief discussion ensued regarding the reuse of wastewater disposal versus paying others to get rid of it.

Mayor Brantz declared a break at 10 a.m. Council reconvened at 10:19 a.m.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the current Planning and Inspections Fee Schedule. Council Member Mason noted that the current schedule disincentives redevelopment rather than new development. Mr. Ward advised Council that they should begin thinking about height limitations downtown. He noted that with the proposed parking decks that may be coming to the forefront soon, Council will need to decide if they would prefer to allow more height on buildings to accommodate more parking spaces, specifically for the public, or keep the current height limitation and only have commercial and residential parking spaces available where developments by private parties are concerned. He stated that this concern is due to the requirement that elevators have additional space above the top floor of the development, which would cause such a matter to need to be addressed.

Council discussed the possibility of creating Town staff for parking enforcement and custodian services, requesting that Mr. Ward provide cost comparisons for both cases. Mr. Ward provided Council with the idea of having downtown ambassadors for directing tourists and helping with parking meters and pay stations.

### EXISTING SERVICES/TOWN DEPARTMENT FEEDBACK

Several Council members expressed their appreciation for the hard work of the public works and police departments. Discussion ensued regarding panhandling, especially in downtown with the new parking meters and pay stations, and how this might cause a safety perception issue. Council was in consensus that Mr. Ward should look into revising the panhandling ordinance, and possibly address the selling of goods on the sidewalks downtown, to bring back to Council.

### COUNCIL LIAISON VOTING PROCEDURE

This item was not discussed at the retreat.

## FINANCE

Finance Director Amy Davis presented her annual report of accomplishments, goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. She advised Council that they will be using a new utility billing system which will handle sending out invoices as well as collecting payments. Discussion ensued regarding expanding parking ticket collection through this vendor, replacement of Queen Street parking meters, and a threshold before issuing parking tickets once the meter expires. Ms. Davis advised Council that despite rumors that parking enforcement personnel are receiving notifications to their devices when a meter expires, they do not have that function on their devices. Council was in consensus that they would like staff to look into implementing a threshold before a parking ticket is issued once it has expired. Brief discussion ensued regarding making the upstairs finance department of Town Hall handicap accessible and whether or not there is a need for an IT staff member.

Mayor Brantz declared a break at 12:13 p.m. Council reconvened at 12:20 p.m.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources Director Peri Moretz presented her annual report of accomplishments, goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Discussion ensued regarding salaries in Boone versus other like towns across the state. Council asked that Mr. Ward provide a link to the NC League of Municipalities' list of salaries for comparison purposes. Ms. Moretz also advised that she would look into if the Wellness Center is continuing to participate in the BCBS Health Ways program for staff to utilize various gyms in the area at lower cost. Members of Council expressed their appreciation that staff get their birthdays off from work and in dealing with the winter weather, delaying opening if needed.

## POLICE

Police Chief Dana Crawford presented his annual report of accomplishments, goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Discussion ensued regarding the success of the investigation division and narcotics division. Chief

Crawford advised Council that they work closely with the other police enforcement entities in the area. Chief Crawford also provided an explanation of the police reserve program, which they hope to utilize moving forward. Council requested to see what the ratio of police officers to citizens would be if two officers were added.

Mayor Brantz declared a break at 2:03 p.m. Council reconvened at 2:17 p.m.

## FIRE

Fire Chief Jimmy Isaacs presented his annual report of accomplishments, goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Discussion ensued regarding the protection class ratings in town and in the rural districts, and collaboration with ASU and the rural fire districts for the purchase of equipment, vehicles and personnel that benefit all entities involved. Council requested from Mr. Ward to see how much funding came back to the rural fire district after the sales tax redistribution. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of renovating fire station #1 or creating a fifth fire station down the road as well as whether or not an IT staff member is needed.

## PLANNING & INSPECTIONS

Planning Director Bill Bailey presented his annual report of accomplishments, goals and priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Discussion ensued regarding a revised public hearing process in order to shorten the time frame between an application being submitted and going through the various meetings necessary. Council was in consensus that a special meeting should be scheduled to hold a planning retreat in order to further discuss possible revisions to the Unified Development Ordinance as well as updates to the Comprehensive Plan and the 2030 Plan. Council also was in consensus to send revisions to the public hearing process to the April 4, 2016, special public hearing that will be scheduled at the next regular Council meeting. Council asked that the more complex case outline included in Mr. Bailey's retreat report be kept in order to say "no" to certain requests if they so choose. Council was in consensus that the simple hearing process proposed would be for general zoning map amendments, text amendments required by the State, and amendments that are directed by Town Council. Council also was in consensus that they would like to see a sign placed when entering downtown acknowledging it as a historic district.

## DEBRIEF AND REVIEW OF DISCUSSION ITEMS/PROJECTS

Mr. Ward reviewed the schedule for the second day of the retreat, noting the biggest item is the list of needed repairs and equipment for the Public Works Department. He also passed around the design for the Town Hall sign, which Council liked. Council Member Mason wondered if the frontage of Town Hall prevented people from knowing that Town Hall is located there. Mr. Ward stated he would look into the possibility of removing that frontage and what that would entail.

With no further discussion, Mayor Brantz adjourned the meeting at 4:44 p.m.

**(All departmental memoranda, capital improvement plans and handouts are permanently on file in the February 2016 Annual Retreat meeting file.)**

Christine Pope, Town Clerk

Rennie Brantz, Mayor