

Town Council Meeting - Tuesday, July 11th, 2023

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock, NC. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Doug Matheson and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett, and Pete Gherini. Others in attendance were Interim Town Manager Kevin Rothrock, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineers Doug Chapman and Jared Wright, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, IT Director Thomas Steele and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner. Public Works Director Matt Blackburn was unable to attend.

Charlie Sellers

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for attending our Town Council meeting this evening, Tuesday July 11, 2023.

Charlie Sellers

Roll call. All in attendance.

Charlie Sellers

Approval of minutes. This is the June 13, 2023. Regular and closed session. Did the Council get the revision of the minutes? There were a few little glitches that Hilari was able to catch and take care of. Do I have a motion to approve?

Pete Gherini

Motion to approve.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, do I have a second?

Melissa Pickett

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion? Okay. How do you vote?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Approval of the minutes from June 26, 2023, Mid-year Retreat meeting. Do I have a motion?

Doug Matheson

So, moved.

Charlie Sellers

Do I have a second.

David Harwood

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Any discussion? Okay, how do you vote?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Minutes are approved. Hilari, thanks for catching those errors and fixing them for us. Regular agenda adoption. Do I have a motion to approve the regular agenda as set forth?

Albert Yount

So, moved.

David Harwood

Second.

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Consent Agenda; Budget Amendment 2023-11, Tax Report, Fireworks - Chetola Approval. Motion to approve.

Doug Matheson

So, moved.

Melissa Pickett

Second.

Charlie Sellers

All in favor?

All

All in favor of the motion.

Charlie Sellers

Public Comments. Mr. Brett Sorge come on up and state your name and address please.

Brett Sorge

My name is Brett Sorge, I've been living in Blowing Rock for five years, I live at 154 High Ridge Lane, off of Hillwind Estates. I have no complaints, I strictly wanted to make a couple comments/suggestions. Some of this is coming because I have a background as a developer. I had shopping centers, strip shopping centers, all kinds of townhouses, all kinds of things, all in the Northeast. And I have also had some mortgage company experience. So, I'm just maybe imparting some things that I've learned over the years that may be useful; maybe, maybe not. Number one, I was reading over the Town regulations that you have concerning overall Town regulations. It talks a bit about construction, but it doesn't talk about at all how people have to maintain their homes. I am talking about their outside yards, and how things are kept. You have nothing that addresses that. I appreciate this handled a little bit differently. And it's a big help when you're in a community where it's heavily HOA, and you allow the HOA's to regulate these things. We don't have that too much here. So, you kind of rely a bit on the Town or County regulations. And there's not much addressing that. I must thank Kevin here, I complained about a place up on Possum Hollow, that house is basically abandoned, there's a car in the driveway, its windows are knocked out. Kevin was nice enough, he sent a crew up, they cut the grass and everything. There are two other ones that I'm familiar with. One over behind the school over here, with the parking on both sides, across the way there's like a little driveway, that's totally pushed in, and you see in the background it's a little bit of a house. It's just been sitting there for years, years and years. And then on the other side we have what I call Gray Gardens, which is a fairly large thing. On the other side, nothing's been cut, nothing's been done with it for years and years. And to me, we have such a lack of spacing, especially for parking. It seems like we could, you know, put some pressure on the people that own these things, to maybe either fix them up, do something, or go after, you know, putting liens on trying to take over the property, maybe put some more parking in for the Town. Just a thought. The second thing I wanted to mention is I'm a regular hiker, and so I go all the time to Bass Lake. As we all know, I think there's not enough parking there. And this has nothing to do with the Town. Because I appreciate you have no authority over the park system. But I think some pressure should be brought to, you know, maybe do something to encourage them to expand parking. Because if it's a problem now it's going to be much more of a problem. It's a real problem. I want to mention something about the water treatment plant. I know you spent some money; you know fixing it up in the last year or two. The water tower there, either pressure clean or paint it. It really looks kind of shotty when you drive by there. Those are the main things that I see. And the other thing I want to mention is restaurants, we know we have a problem with not enough restaurants here. Restaurants have been going out of business. From my experience, especially what I've seen going to all the cities around the country, they've changed out, they've changed out how what kinds of restaurants they have, they're trying to put in restaurants that have minimal wait staff. Things where you have to walk up to a counter,

you order something, they put it on your table, and you clean it up yourself afterwards. But there's ways and you're probably going to say to yourself well, you know, this is not a Town's responsibility, but maybe through the Chamber of Commerce. They could go after different sections. I'm going to wrap this up because I am running out of time. One last thing, if any of you have never gone to the city of West Jefferson. I think it's a good idea, if you haven't, go to that Town and see how they do things. Because they've done a phenomenal job, I think of that Town and they don't have any of the problems that I see here, they don't have there. Lots of restaurants, lots of places, lots of stores. Everything is very thriving and to keep everything pristine. And that's it, thank you.

Charlie Sellers

Thank you. Okay, Regular Agenda. Memorial Park Bathroom's Bid Award. Jared Wright with McGill. How are you sir?

Jared Wright

I'm good. How are you sir?

Charlie Sellers

Good.

Jared Wright

Mr. Mayor, Council Members. Let's review the Memorial Park Restroom Project Bid and summarize where we are to date and then, for your consideration, we have presented two award scenarios. So bids were received on June 22nd. VPC Builders was the low bidder at that time. And in our recommendation for award, we have offered again two scenarios, the first being, a contract value of \$901,000. That includes construction of the restroom and renovation, and then unsuitable soil allowance and rock excavation. The second consideration, we've also included the solar roof installation, which was a \$40,000 allowance. So, for your consideration tonight we have two dollar values either \$901,000, excluding the solar roof, or \$941,000, including the solar roof.

Charlie Sellers

Kevin, what kind of monies do we have available for this?

Kevin Rothrock

Mayor, there's a fund balance allocation, and Nicole put all this together, I appreciate it, didn't really know the source of it. In March of 2022, a fund balance allocation of \$152,000, a GO Bond of \$431,000, TDA contribution of \$152,000, ABC Store contribution of \$50,000, the net loan payoff from the BRAHM property sale of \$257,000. And then we'd like to request from TDA, going forward, what we had already have earmarked for parking deck payment of that loan of \$83,200. We have not done that yet, but that's what we'd like to do, to bring the total to \$1.1 million. There will still be a shortfall of \$35,000, based on the current program for the park bathrooms. So, to cover that shortfall, you might consider at this time not doing the solar roof panels, which the allowance is \$40,000. So that would help us to be able to fund the project.

Charlie Sellers

If I may Council, I have got a question. They said the bid came in at \$901,000, correct?

Kevin Rothrock

It was \$894,000 plus the the additions of the rock removal, of that is an allowance for that of \$6,000, another \$1,000 for unsuitable soils to bring in better compaction.

Charlie Sellers

But the number you just gave us was \$1.1 million.

Kevin Rothrock

Let me go back through the entire project. So, \$894,000 plus \$6,000 for rock removal \$1,000 for unsuitable soil. Those allowances were already included in the bid package, solar panels of \$40,000, a contingency of \$50,000 recommended by McGill to cover whatever may happen through the project. The engineering is \$169,700, including \$124,700 that's been spent to date and that's for the whole project. That's for all of Memorial Park. So, we're trying to think about all the things that have been spent on the project and ways to fund it and to give you a total. That does not include going forward with phase two, which is the rest of the project.

Charlie Sellers

So, you're asking the Council for how much fund balance? \$152,000?

Kevin Rothrock

Nothing if we take the solar panels off the bid.

Albert Yount'

Is there any return-on-investment data on solar?

Kevin Rothrock

I don't know what those are. Jared you may?

Jared Wright

I don't have those tonight. It is a grid tied system, what has been proposed, meaning that if you don't have battery back-up to power your facility in the event of a grid outage. However, you do have dual meter installation. One that will turn using solar and then turn backwards if solar is, you have an excess of the energy that goes back into the grid. But as far as an actual ROI, no I do not have that tonight.

Kevin Rothrock

It would work great today, on a day like today, but we don't have as many days like this as other places off the mountain.

Albert Yount

Well, I've got it on my house and it's 30% year over year. But I don't have a battery.

David Harwood

I can tell you Albert, the installations that we've been seeing in our projects the ROI is about, depends on the price of electricity, but it's about seven years. And typically, the panels are, I'm not exactly sure which ones these are, they're warrantied for 20 years. So, you got about a 20-year warranty on them, they pay for themselves in about seven. That is what I'm typically seeing, but there's a lot of variables in there. This is really a good place for a non-battery system, because you will not be using it as much in the evenings when you would need a battery. And so, it's probably a really good thing. I can't tell you what the ROI would be, but they keep improving the technology.

Pete Gherini

If we were not to approve solar, and just go with electrical standard, I mean, do we have any numbers of what that would cost.

Kevin Rothrock

It's back to \$901,000 for the project.

Pete Gherini

No, I'm talking about if we're being asked to approve another \$40,000 for the solar, if we don't do solar. What are some of the costs associated with just electric or do we measure that?

Charlie Sellers

The solar is in addition to.

Pete Gherini

No, I understand that. But if we don't do solar energy.

Doug Matheson

You're talking about energy costs.

Pete Gherini

Yeah, utility cost. Thank you, Doug.

Kevin Rothrock

I understand, you're saying how much would it cost us in just general utilities if we don't use solar.

Pete Gherini

Right.

Kevin Rothrock

I don't have anything on that.

Pete Gherini

Okay, I mean, just as a matter of information, so we have the ability to measure apples to apples rather than apples to oranges.

Charlie Sellers

Could the Council decide on the solar at a later date and move forward with the contract at \$901,000? In other words, do solar at a later date period, without any big issues.

Kevin Rothrock

Absolutely.

Doug Matheson

I'm looking at solar, and correct me David if I'm wrong, it seems it has gotten cheaper. It's come down from what it used to be. You know, if we don't do it now, it could actually even be a little bit cheaper when we do it a little later. I mean, just throwing that out there it doesn't seem to be going the other way that I've noticed.

David Harwood

No, I think there's more to it than just the cost, I think that we really need to be looking at sustainable alternatives. I would not put it off hoping that the price would come down later if that's where you're going with that.

Doug Matheson

No, I'm just saying if we put it off and we still want to do it. It's just a matter of now or just a little later.

David Harwood

Yeah, but I know us.

Albert Yount

What's it gonna run the lights in the in the restrooms themselves and fans? How much would that cost? Not a lot I wouldn't think. I think if we're gonna do solar, we need to light the Christmas trees with it.

Charlie Sellers

You would need battery backup. What do you think Council?

Pete Gherini

Kevin, what's the timeframe that if we approve this. When is it going to start and when's it gonna finish?

Jared Wright

Once you make a decision for awarding the contract, we will notify the contractor and begin assembling the construction contracts. Usually that process from the time we send them out and get them back is about 15 days. And then of course, we'll send them to the Town for final execution. So, you're looking at about a month to execute contracts and then we'll schedule a pre-construction meeting and move forward. So that is about a month and a half roughly. And that's the best case scenario, 30 to 60 days.

Pete Gherini

Thank you.

Doug Matheson

I will throw out a motion and we will see which way it goes. I make a motion that we do it without the solar right now.

Pete Gherini

Second.

Charlie Sellers

Okay, so you want to do the contract at the cost of \$901,000, give or take and Pete seconded the motion. Is there anything else?

Kevin Rothrock

Plus, the contingencies, engineering and all the things that we've listed in the table.

Albert Yount

I vote for that.

David Harwood

I'm gonna vote against it only because I would love to see the solar added.

Melissa Pickett

I'm going against it for the same reason David is. It's only three and a half percent of the \$901,000. I think that's a reasonable number that we can fund right now.

Doug Matheson

I vote yes to the motion.

Pete Gherini

Yes.

Charlie Sellers

Motion passes. And keep in mind we can always come back to do solar. I mean, you can change your mind in three or four months. See if ABC store will kick in some more money.

Kevin Rothrock

We'll take a look.

Doug Matheson

Or hopefully TDA will.

Kevin Rothrock

Let's take a look at some options on how we can, you know, maybe we can partner with someone. A pilot project or David might know somebody.

Charlie Sellers

And I think Pete had a good point, that Doug greatly enlightened us on, which was what's the cost of the electrical? You know, and how much will it save the Town? That'd be a good number if we could get it. You know, I know it's an estimate.

Kevin Rothrock

I want to go on to say a little bit more about phase two. Doug and I talked today with Jennifer about, we're gonna get together in a couple of weeks and start combing through phase two. And prioritizing and speaking with PARTF, asking what do we have to have to be able to qualify. And see if there's some savings and look at and bring it back to you before we send out for a true bid.

Charlie Sellers

Don't we already have the PARTF grant of a half a million?

Kevin Rothrock

We have to do the elements; the bathrooms don't qualify.

Charlie Sellers

Right.

Kevin Rothrock

We have to do the elements of the park plan to get the funding. So, we want to make sure that whatever we do, we're gonna end up with funding before we move forward. We want to get a true bid rather than what we got originally, which had the bathrooms and I think a couple of contractors backed off because they were not part of that. They want to look at the park elements.

Albert Yount

This does include renovation of existing right?

Kevin Rothrock

Yes sir it does.

Charlie Sellers

Move on? You good? Okay. Food Truck update. Planning Director Brian Johnson.

Brian Johnson

Thank you, Mayor, good evening Council. I don't have anything formal tonight. This is kind of a carryover from the Retreat. I think just a few more small items to be thinking about. And Melissa handed out a survey from the Chamber there. I don't know if you have had a chance to read through that or not. But I think in a nutshell, the food trucks went very well out here. Over the fourth, there were two of them. I think there may have been a little glitch with internet for credit card usage, that was

something minor. But other than that, I think everything went well. I'm sure Jennifer's here if there's any questions for her, she can answer. For the most part everything went good with those. Things just kind of a carry over from where do we want to go, maybe just further discussion or where we're at with this. Melissa, maybe can chime in with the survey and clarify anything on that. But I think we're just looking at discussion here.

Charlie Sellers

Do you all want to hear from Jennifer? Jennifer, could you come up please?

Jennifer Brown

So we had two food trucks at the Fourth of July festival here in the police station parking lot. I do know that one did so well that they were like, we want to come back every time you have a festival. And then the other one did decently well. I think it was the first time we'd really had food trucks offered. So I think there's a lot of people that didn't realize that they were there in the parking lot. It stayed busy, I mean, it was a constant flow. I saw a lot of people picnicking out in the grass with their food that they had received. So we got great feedback from people that were there. It was also during a festival, a lot of people extra people in town too. I don't know if you have any other questions.

Pete Gherini

Jennifer, I saw you there, because I came down after the parade just to see how they were going. And I also noticed that all the restaurants were full. I didn't inquire as to if there were waiting times. I don't know, but the food trucks, the two that were there, provided, as you mentioned, people in the park seemed to have beverages and food. So, I think you thought that was a very positive thing, right?

Jennifer Brown

Yes, absolutely. I mean, you get some families that come in there with kids and they are in the park playing, we have park games, so it's hard sometimes to take kids away to go sit down and eat in a restaurant and then have to come back. So I do think it is a good thing when we have festivals and having a lot of people to come.

Pete Gherini

Charlie, just one other comment. I did talk to Lee Anne from Egg Roll-in, and I don't know if she was expecting a bigger number. She said she only did \$600. She says that truck down in Hickory would do \$1,500. And so was that a mix of the product that was the problem or?

Jennifer Brown

I don't know, it was really hot that day, so I don't know if people were like, I don't want an egg roll, I'd rather have an icee. So I mean, I'm not sure. Like I said it was the first time we'd ever had a food truck at our Fourth of July festival. So I think it sometimes takes a little while to sort of get people use to when you start making changes of what you have to offer. Because I've already had probably half a dozen to a dozen phone calls about next year's festival and what day it's on. So people are planning ahead. So this is a tradition that they do, they come and so this is the first year we've ever offered this. So, I think if we continue, I think people will start being like, oh, they're offering things besides just going to a restaurant.

Doug Matheson

Well, I think you said start with, you've got to look at what your clientele is on parade days, and it's mostly children.

Jennifer Brown

It is.

Doug Matheson

So are children going to take Egg Roll-in or are children gonna take this? I don't think any type of food you would have put there would have made more than what the kids would want to have.

Jennifer Brown

And like I said, we were kind of behind the game when we were asking food trucks if they wanted to come because a lot of them were in West Jefferson at the Christmas in July Festival. Like it's something they do annually. So I think our weekend sort of fell at the same time so that was difficult. They plan out ahead of time, so that's our goal, to start now to plan out for a year ahead now since apparently it's a big thing.

Pete Gherini

So when Art in the Park happens where would a food truck go?

Jennifer Brown

They wouldn't be able to go into the police station parking lot because they have tents there so that's good question.

Kevin Rothrock

Art in the Park, I don't know if there's a number. Do the Boy Scouts still sell hotdogs?

Jennifer Brown

Yes and so does the Library.

Kevin Rothrock

How much do they do? I'm not asking to compete. What amount do they do?

Pete Gherini

What the library?

Kevin Rothrock

Yeah.

Pete Gherini

I have no idea. I know they're very successful, they raise a lot of money for them.

Kevin Rothrock

Do they do a couple hundred?

Melissa Pickett

The gentleman to ask would be on the back row.

Charles Hardin

The library; it's their biggest fundraiser of the year. I don't know how many they do. I think they probably, I remember something about three hundred.

Kevin Rothrock

They do about three hundred at \$3 a piece?

Doug Matheson

And then that on top of what the Scouts do.

Kevin Rothrock

Right, okay, and the scouts too. So maybe they do about \$1,000 each event.

Albert Yount

I hear hunky dory about food trucks. And then I see this, it came through the Chamber is that right Charles?

Charles Hardin

Yes.

Albert Yount

And it's not all hunky dory. It is from people that make their living running restaurants. So I would like to ask you to maybe expand on this, if you want to.

Charlie Sellers

Charles, could you come up?

Charles Hardin

Want me to give my address?

Charlie Sellers

Yeah, for the record.

Charles Hardin

780 Lauren Lane. So this survey was done just of restaurant owners, there were 29 people that received the survey, we got a 38% return, which is pretty good for a survey, although I was surprised at some of the ones that didn't respond. Some of the ones that I would have expected to hear from. You can see there, the top line that seven of them said no and four of them said yes. If you read on down

in it. Some of them change their minds, some you know it's not real clear whether you're a clear yes or a clear no. It's more like a conditional yes or a conditional no. That is what I took from reading this. The one that I thought was most interesting is these people that just opened the Cupcrazed Cafe, they used to own two food trucks in Charlotte. And so this whole back page, this document that you have, is some of their comments about food trucks from the other side of it. So I mean, now they're in a brick and mortar situation, they're depending on you know, paying rent or mortgage or whatever it is, they have to pay there. They're planning to keep that restaurant open year-round, so they will be depending on that income. You know, the season here is really May through October. And so you really have to make, what I'm hearing here, is you have to make it in those six months. Those are your black ink months, you will have at least four red ink months. And you'll have two months that are maybe black, maybe red. So that's kind of how a restaurant works in this town, having owned one for 15 years. I can go back and show you how it works. So in the summer they really do depend on this volume from the visitors to pay the rent in the winter basically. But these folks, Wendy and I can't remember his name, but they just opened the Cupcrazed Cafe. Having owned those food trucks, they were able to talk about things like trash. And you know, most of the food trucks don't have trash, you know, they don't bring their own trash cans, they're gonna be using your trash cans. And so if you remember back during the shutdown, we had some real problems with trash, because all the trash cans were full of pizza boxes. Do you remember that? They were piling out of them so, the Town would be doing the trash service. Whereas if they're a brick and mortar restaurant, they're actually paying for their trash removal. The parking thing was the other thing, now we're talking about some off the street kind of locations. I think is what I am to understand like back here in the police lot. But they explained to me that a food truck takes three parking spaces. So just keep that in mind. They are very long vehicles. So that's two spaces. And usually they have to have a third space for generator, because the codes in most places make them put the generator away from the unit. So those are just few things that I took out of that last page. Any questions, I mean, I've talked to a lot of these people, I have even talked to some that didn't fill out the thing. A lot of the higher end, dinner places didn't fill out the survey because they didn't think that a food truck would affect them in any way. Which I don't think anybody's making a decision between a food truck and the Best Cellar for dinner.

Albert Yount

Thank you.

Charlie Sellers

Anyone have any more questions for Charles? Thank you Mr. Hardin.

Charles Hardin

Alright. You are welcome.

Charlie Sellers

So I guess the next question is how does the Council or if the Council would like to research this further? If it's something you do on say a Fourth of July and Labor Day or is it something you do every Saturday or do you not do it at all. What do you think Council? How do you want Kevin to have staff move forward? Or do you?

Doug Matheson

I am kind of like Albert, after seeing this, I don't know why we don't just don't stay like we are. Special events only.

Pete Gherini

Yeah, I think it's fair to say that restaurants are going to start opening up. Brian, we talked, Mexican Rock just open today. They're doing breakfast, lunch and dinner. I had breakfast there, it's fabulous. So they're geared up. Brian, you said that El Rincon is a couple of weeks away.

Brian Johnson

They're, getting closer, I think within a few weeks there. Will also point out I spoke with Mellow Mushroom the first of the week. And I think later in the day, on the Fourth of July, they had nobody. So I think it was just an influx of folks at the parade. And I think the food trucks that were out here probably helped divert some of that busyness. Special Events is probably a good thing. But we're getting a lot of things back online.

Charlie Sellers

What do you think Council, status quo and move on.

David Harwood

I think it's only appropriate when we have a huge influx of people in Town. Like our Fourth of July event, potentially our Christmas parade day, something like that. I would not support something every Saturday or once a Saturday during high season or anything. But I think when we have a large number of people, given our current restaurant situation. We can't accommodate everybody and this is a good alternative. I think it added to the festivities, I came down here and checked it out. And I think it was an addition to everything else. I saw a lot of people during the watermelon eating contest. You know they were moseying on over to the food. That was the most energetic watermelon eating contest. The guy that won, I didn't think would be the guy that won but anyway. I mean, what would be in another appropriate, I'm asking you Jennifer, when would be another appropriate time in Town that might be appropriate, obviously Fourth of July and maybe Lighting of the Town?

Jennifer Brown

I don't think it is necessary the parade day, the parade is on Saturday at 10:00 in the morning and then that's it for that day. So, I would probably say that Friday for Lighting of the Town. And I would say for our Halloween Festival it might be good to have some then.

David Harwood

I would say Fourth of July and maybe that, but I would love the Council to give you some direction because like you said you have to get on these people's calendars fairly early.

Charlie Sellers

So generally, y'all are saying Fourth of July, Lighting of the Town and the Halloween Festival.

Kevin Rothrock

Halloween or the third week of October always seems to be the biggest.

Charlie Sellers

We don't need a motion for this if we're not going to change the ordinance. We just instruct Kevin to move forward. Ya'll okay with that.

All

All were.

Charlie Sellers

Alright. Okay, Jennifer, thank you. Thanks, Brian. Thank you Charles Hardin. Official reports and comments. Alright, as Mayor, I would like to say thank you, to the citizens. I want to say thank you to Parks and Rec. All the department heads, all the volunteers because one thing I've had nothing but compliments on the Fourth of July parade. People said they just couldn't believe how quickly the Town got opened, how well organized it was and people were just really impressed. Now nobody knew who I was because they couldn't find the labels for my car. My hat's off to everybody. The citizens were great, I know our visitors felt very welcome. And so thanks to all of you. Also, we've had some incidents with where our paramedics and our police have been called in for medical issues. And I'll tell you, you know, I'm seeing at least one comment every couple of weeks on what a good job they've done. So my hat's off, my thanks to our police and fire services and what they do. I can't leave out our sanitation they do a great job too.

David Harwood

I echo everything that you said about the July Fourth Festival, I think it was well executed. All the department heads collaborated and there was another wonderful event. So thank you to everybody. The other comment I have is I've been getting some comments in my neighborhood and been noticing it myself, about the abundance of amplified music. We have a concert every Friday night downtown, Saturday, last Sunday, Town Tavern on Mondays. Charles is nodding his head, he probably hears it in his neighborhood. And it's becoming problematic in my opinion, especially to, neighborhoods that border downtown to allow them to have quiet enjoyment of their property. And so I think we need, I would ask that we consider that and potentially take action down the road.

Doug Matheson

The short-term rentals right now it seems like it's still stuck in session. No news is good news there. The ETJ passed but what it was is with counties below 50,000. So it did not end up affecting us. It did affect Boone because they cannot proceed with wanting to extend and get their ETJ back. But we can't extend ours. What we have is all will have for right now. Unless Legislative changes again.

Pete Gherini

Couple of things. I'm sure all of you have heard comments about parking. And now that Winkler's lot is paid parking, Wells Fargo lot is paid parking. A lot of that parking is going down to the post office. And I've had people say, there's only two people in the post office, and the parking lot at the post office is full. I know for a fact that there are a couple of people at Mellow Mushroom that are using it. And so I don't know if we need to have somebody go talk to the manager at Mellow Mushroom and say, you

know, the parking places at the post office are not for your employees. And I'm going to get a picture of who the person is that's doing it. But anyway, complaints about that. And I know there are signs posted at the post office. But it's the enforcement issue that we always come back to. How do we, and that's not our problem really. It's the problem of the owner of the property, right. That's what it comes down to. But the blowback is coming back to us or some of us about why can't we fix it. So I'll leave that. I would like to welcome back Thomas. I know Thomas has been gone for a little bit, it's good to have him back. And Kevin, you take good care of him now.

Kevin Rothrock

I will.

Pete Gherini

The other thing, I did, as I mentioned before, I did go to the Mexican Restaurant, and Maria Ruiz is the owner. And she would like to extend an invitation to all of us to come up there and hang out and for the citizens to come out. Because that is a very sharp operator. She's been doing it for five years in Boone and she knows how to play this game. Finally, Economic Development Commission this month, the 21st. We have representative Pickett, who's going to be talking to us probably for as long as he wants to talk. But anyway, he's the only person we have. So it's open to the public. It will be at the Chamber offices in Boone and we would invite anybody that would want to come and talk to Ray to join us.

Kevin Rothrock

When is that again Pete.

Pete Gherini

The 21st which is a Friday at 1:30 at the Chamber office in Boone. Thank you.

Charlie Sellers

All right, Mr. Rothrock.

Kevin Rothrock

Thank you, Mayor. A couple of quick updates, the Comp Plan, we're going to meet with Benchmark the last week of July. Trying to set a date to meet with the subcommittee and to get an update with Benchmark. Went around with Town Engineer Doug and Jared today, looking at some stormwater hotspots and on Dogwood and Laurel Park and also Sourwood to look at maybe some modifications to what the Town had done a few years ago to address some stormwater overcharge. A lot of times it's just a storm event that causes the issue, but seeing how we can minimize those even in a big storm event. We put an update or something on Facebook and the Town website about pruning back hedges that are along with streets. They've had an opportunity to grow and are out in the streets. And so we're asking people to go ahead and prune those back and we may have to make direct contact with them if they have not seen that notice. Cause we want to keep these the streets clear. So hopefully that message has been received. And I think it was in the newsletter. We're investigating the possibility of allowing credit cards, Nicole and I talked last week about adding that Townwide. We're going to study that a little bit more late fall. And how we can do that because there's a lot of opportunities that we can hopefully benefit from it. I had the landscape guys out this week, they're out today doing some repairs

in places. We've got some pavers on Main Street sidewalks that have sunk over the years and they're doing some repairs and lifting those areas up. They started today across the street. A lot of the block from Sunset down to Chestnut. That section was done with a different design, where the pavers were on a concrete base, then sand and then the paver. Those have done very well. Some of it on this side, when we first started back in 2009, there are some places where they've sunk and pitched and so we're trying to address those and make a good place for the public to walk. The other update Symphony is July 21st, Tour of Homes is July 28th. And I want to continue to thank staff they've been supporting me and helping me. There's a lot I don't know, and they know and they serve well. Even just down to the part-time people and the camp counselors. Those people are critical to how we work as a Town. So, I want to thank them. That is all I got.

Charlie Sellers

All right, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to take a recess, then we are going into closed session.

Albert Yount

Under the North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11.(a)(3) - To consult with attorney retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege.

Melissa Pickett

Second.

Charlie Sellers

And there will be no decisions made during this closed session. And then we will adjourn right after the closed session. Thank you so much for attending this evening.

MAYOR _____

ATTEST _____

Charlie Sellers

Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Budget Amendment #2023-11 – Attachment A

Tax Report – Attachment B