

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
March 11, 2025

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, 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, Council Members Cat Perry, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett and Pete Gherini. Others in attendance were Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Joey Petrack, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Public Works Director Matt Blackburn, Finance Director Tasha Brown, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Police Chief Nathan Kirk, Landscape Director Cory Cathcart, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, IT Director Thomas Steele 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. Mayor Sellers verified attendance via roll call.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Sellers read a statement explaining an error that occurred in calculating the attendance on the Board of Adjustment for Mr. Brandon Walker.

MINUTE APPROVAL

Council Member Gherini made the motion to approve the minutes from February 11, 2025, regular session, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Sellers stated the Middle Fork Greenway Easement had been removed from the consent agenda as the UNC Health wasn't ready to proceed. With the change, Council Member Harwood made a motion to adopt the regular agenda, seconded by Council Member Pickett.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Budget Amendment – 2025-05**
- 2. Tax Advertisement Date Approval – April 16, 2025**
- 3. Reimbursement Resolution – 2025 Installment Financing**

Council Member Gherini made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Perry. Unanimously approved.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Resolution – Post Helene Support for Small Business

Boone Chamber Director David Jackson spoke on behalf of both the Boone and Blowing Rock Chambers thanking the Council for their quick response to adopt the resolution supporting small businesses affected by hurricane Helene as well as encouraging state and local partners to continue support. He stated the area is still dealing with both the economic and physical fall outs of the hurricane. He explained the county adopted a similar resolution supporting further efforts from the State and Federal and in turn are asking the local municipalities to adopt a resolution as well.

Mayor Sellers read the resolution.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Shoppes on the Parkway

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock stated Shoppes on the Parkway LLC is requesting a conditional rezoning of the Shoppes on the Parkway property from GB, General Business to Conditional Zoning – General Business (CZ-GB). The applicant is requesting to redevelop the property from a single-level retail center to a mixed-use development with retail, restaurants, and residential units in a three (3) to four (4) story building on the south end of the property along the Middle Fork New River. The Applicant is sharing the entire Master Plan with the community for future long-term expectations but anything beyond Phase 1A will require additional approval.

The Applicant purchased Shoppes on the Parkway in 2022 and have determined the property is underutilized. The Applicant proposes a community with residential, retail shops, restaurants, adequate parking, outdoor lawn and dining areas, all tied together within a walkable development with pedestrian connections to sidewalks and the future Middle Fork Greenway.

Some of the proposed buildings in the build out project will exceed thirty-five (35) feet in height so an increased forty (40) foot street and sixteen (16) foot side/rear setback will be required. Although the current plans indicate a twenty (20) foot street and eight (8) side/rear setback, the project meets all setback requirements.

The majority of the proposed residential building will be thirty-seven (37) feet in height. However, the five (5) mezzanine areas will have a maximum height of fifty-three (53) feet measured at the primary building entrance. The Applicant is asking for this as a condition of approval.

The residential building will have a combination of vertical wood siding with heavy timber beams and accents. There is substantial stucco/efis planned for the exterior walls. Staff has asked for the reduction in that type of siding material and requested wood lap siding if appropriate. The roofing will be a brown standing seam metal and natural rock will be used

for columns, accents, and the proposed chimneys.

Since this is Phase 1A only, staff has recommended a condition that if the future phases do not happen that the Applicant be required to make some exterior upgrades to the existing retail shops that blend with and compliment the proposed residential building.

The current parking lot will be adjusted to accommodate the proposed residential building once the end of the retail building is removed. Parking for the residential building will be separated somewhat from the rest of the retail center with buffering.

The Applicant proposes one (1) parking space for every one (1) bedroom until, and two (2) parking spaces for every two (2) or three plus (3+) bedroom units plus one (1) space for every four (4) units in the residential building. The total proposed parking is seventy-four (74) spaces and the Applicant is providing seventy-seven (77) spaces.

The proposed impervious areas are being reduced with Phase 1A and the overall build out of the project. The Applicant is proposing rain gardens and bio swales to treat storm water and provide water quality benefits.

Public water and sewer currently serves the property but the Applicant will need to relocate some of the lines to accommodate the proposed building location.

All electrical services will be provided underground.

A new dumpster area will be provided and screened in the redesigned parking lot between the proposed residential building and the retail building. All other dumpsters on the property currently without screening will be required to add screening that meets the Land Use Code requirements.

With the removal of the south end units of the current retail building, the parking lot in front of the proposed residential building will be reorganized. There are additional parking lot shade trees and a line of buffer screening needs to be added. This buffer will be required in the final plan review.

The stream side of the building has an existing vegetated stream buffer that will remain and help to screen the proposed building from Hwy 321.

With an approval of the project, staff has included a section in the rezoning ordinance that addresses the correction of any site deficiencies. These may include lack of dumpster screening, inadequate or excessive site lighting, signage violations, fire access, and/or ADA parking or access issues. Any site deficiencies shall be itemized by the Town prior to issuance if any zoning or building permit, and correction is required before issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for Phase 1A.

Applicant Proposed Conditions

1. Parking: one (1) space for one (1) bedroom units, two (2) spaces for each unit with two (2) or more bedrooms, and visitor spaces to remain at one (1) space per four (4) dwelling units.
2. That the maximum building height of the five (5) mezzanines to be no more than fifty-three (53) feet measured from the primary entrance.

Staff Proposed Conditions

1. If within two (2) years after the issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy for the Phase one (1) condominium building the Applicant decides not to proceed with future phases of the development, then exterior modifications shall be completed on the remaining shopping center buildings. The modifications shall include painting, roofing, siding treatments, rock treatments, timber beams and similar finishes that cause the shopping center buildings to blend and/or match the materials in the Phase one (1) condominium. If the modification work is required for failure to move forward with future phases, the work shall be completed within thirty-six (36) months of the final C.O. issuance for the Phase one (1) condominium.
2. A sidewalk shall be constructed along the access road to connect the proposed Phase one (1) condominiums to the intersection of Hwy 321 (Valley Blvd) and the future Middle Fork Greenway trail head area.

Planning Board Proposed Conditions

1. Any future phases will need to address the parking demand of the entire built-out development, including Phase one (1).

A neighborhood meeting was held at Town Hall on February 13, 2025, where the Applicant shared their immediate and future phases for the property.

At their meeting on February 20, 2025, the Planning Board made a recommendation to approve the conditional rezoning request for Shoppes on the Parkway with the applicant-proposed conditions, additional staff conditions, and one (1) Planning Board condition.

Chris Barefoot spoke on behalf of Oakhill Management, owners of Shoppes on the Parkway and shared some facts about their company and the project. Mr. Barefoot explained that many of the Oakhill Management team are local to the area, the owner of the company is from Morganton and Mr. Barefoot is from Hudson. He further explained they have very fond memories of their times spent in Blowing Rock and want to do great things for this community.

Mr. Barefoot noted when his team began the project they knew they needed to use local resources. The applicant hired Bill Dixon with Appalachian Architecture, Mike Trew with Municipal Engineering and partnered with a local builder Jay Harrell. Mr. Barefoot further noted during the design process they have been very open with staff, taken staff's feedback and implemented it into the project to make sure they are doing the right thing. Mr. Barefoot explained they are a small firm out of Raleigh that manages a small real estate fund and

most of their investors are local investors, not a large firm out of a big city as rumor has suggested. Mr. Barefoot wanted to make that known to the public.

Mr. Barefoot explained their firm is not on a timeline of having to flip properties quickly, they are long-term holders who like to invest in their properties and do the project right. He reiterated their goal is to bring more to the area, make it a more desirable place to eat, shop and spend money. Mr. Barefoot mentioned the surrounding communities have really started to thrive and have given some competition for the Blowing Rock area and his team's goal is to bring some more competition for the area.

Mr. Barefoot cleared up the rumor by stating they do not have to redevelop the property as it performs well on their portfolio. However, the feeling is this property is very under utilized and has so much more potential. In his opinion, Mr. Barefoot feels as though his team has put forth a plan that looks like the mountains, have tried to not make it look like a hotel and the team is proud of what has been put together.

Mr. Barefoot mentioned the team has had a lot of discussion of making it not look like a stucco and went on to describe the current look is that of a beach outlet mall. He explained density is needed for the project to make sense and his team does have a master plan that makes sense. Mr. Barefoot further mentioned they don't want to make this property an eye sore as it is the first major property that you see when you come in from the north side of the town. He acknowledged the proposed building is three (3) stories, but would be shielded by the trees and mainly visible when you are inside the parking lot.

Mike Trew from Municipal Engineering stated this has been a nice project to work on and since this group is not on a timeline, they have been able to be slow and methodical. He further stated they worked on the master plan for a year and have run that plan by Town staff. In his opinion felt like what they have come up with is a good master plan for the project which is a under utilized piece of property.

Bill Dixon from Appalachian Architecture stated he felt they listened to the Planning Board and staff's recommendations and have made several changes in that process. He noted the building, as presented, meets the current ordinance, with the exception of the three (3) foot request to extend the mezzanine area. Mr. Dixon noted they have added a lot of stone and timber framing.

Mayor Sellers opened the public hearing.

John Winkler 296 Rankin Road – agreed the project looked like a mountain property, but didn't think it looked like a Blowing Rock property. He noted he's on several committees that have tried to protect Blowing Rock and felt this project does everything but protect Blowing Rock. Mr. Winkler is hopeful they can develop it into something that is Blowing Rock and further noted he was surprised the Planning Board approved this project to go onto Council. Mr. Winkler concluded with the need to protect Blowing Rock and if this project is allowed it would probably affect Blowing Rock in a way in which would never be recovered.

Bill Devereux 221 Heritage Lane – felt like there were a lot of ‘if’s’ in this project and it was something that is not consistent with the look of Blowing Rock. He was concerned with this being one hundred (100) percent short-term rental and opening that up for investors to come in and make it a “free for all” to our community. Mr. Devereux explained when Shoppes on the Parkway opened in May of 1989, it was a nice addition to town with upscale stores, was off the road, blended well and when it was done you could still see Flat Top Mountain. In his opinion this project that isn’t going to be the case and thinks Council has a few more options to put some more restrictions in place. Mr. Devereux doesn’t think this is consistent with the historical architecture, while he feels the Town has been going towards this type of architecture, he doesn’t feel this is the wish of the Council. He feels the community is a gift that was given to us by the Cone family, Stringfellow family, Cannon family, Tate family, Robbins family, Davant family and they didn’t see a piece of property/land and put dollar signs on it. He concluded with we have to preserve this town, it’s up to all of us to preserve this for the future generations that are going to live and come here to Blowing Rock.

Trina McCoy 537 Main Street – stated she didn’t think this is what Blowing Rock looks like and it’s one of the first things you see when you come into town from Boone. She explained customers come into her shop and complain about other buildings in Town that have been built and don’t look like downtown Blowing Rock. She feels the town is losing that small town feel and what everyone comes up here for. In her opinion this project looks more like Raleigh, Durham, Charlotte and the things people are getting away from by coming up the mountains to go hiking, be in the woods, get that family feeling and in her opinion, this is going to make that feeling go away.

Luke Snyder – From Charlotte but owns a house in Yonahlossee – stated he grew up coming to Chetola in what they called the back forty (40) acres. He concurred with most of the people who have spoke before him. He thinks the architecture is severely lacking for what Blowing Rock is and thinks that should be improved if this project moves forward. Mr. Snyder felt there isn’t any room for the common employees that work in Blowing Rock, the waiters, the people that live here and have jobs. He noted this is a tourist Town to some extent, that is a huge development, and he just felt like the architecture is lacking.

Will Miller 370 Wonderland Drive – stated after hearing about this project, listing to the Planning Board meeting and hearing the presentation, his thinking as a businessperson is to always look at worse case scenarios. He felt there is a lot of promises, but where is the “teeth” in any of that. Mr. Miller further stated there have been several properties in town that have started developing, but then they have just stopped. He explained the town doesn’t have any way to require people to complete projects and that is not good for the community. He further explained worst case with this project it is completed, and in reality a hotel because of the short-term rentals. Mr. Miller reiterated he felt there is a lot of promises about the rest of the property, but there is no “teeth” in it and all these conditions being discussed have no “teeth” in them. He stated there is no recourse unless the town puts some sort of performance bond or something the town can go back on if they don’t follow through with the project, if not it’s opening a big can of worms. He thinks

this project should be master planned and put together a precise project. Mr. Miller's opinion is this property should be re-zoned in a cohesive manner, not piece milled. He's afraid what it will end up being is a hotel that looks like this huge building and the shops that look just like they look now. He concluded with nothing to enforce he would like for Council to have the owner come back with a master plan and put some "teeth" and/or real hard commitment, otherwise, it's going down the wrong road.

Sarah Murphy 175 Heritage Lane – Advised she wrote to Council and appreciated the responses she received back. In her opinion the biggest issue is the short-term rental. She acknowledged they could be the most beautiful architecture that everyone agrees on, but if it stays one hundred (100) percent short-term rentals it's a cultural thing. She noted if that is the case no community members are going to want to buy in there because they would be surrounded by renters all the time. She explained she had dinner a few years ago with some friends that live full time at Eagle's Nest, which is some of the most beautiful architecture around, and she asked how many live full time there and the answer was eight (8). She further explained the couple wanted to sell because of that culture of having renters around all the time. Ms. Murphy shared the quote "Once a place is destroyed it remains destroyed, once it is saved it is up to the future generations to keep fighting to preserve it." She thinks that is a sentiment that so many have about this town. She concluded with everyone wants something that is worthwhile that they want to protect and save. In her opinion people are open to compromise, but this plan still needs a whole lot of work.

Barbara Baker 171 Wonderland Trail - stated her family first came to Blowing Rock in 1954 and she has come every year since then. She further stated she is a registered voter in Blowing Rock. Having watched the town grow from a small regular normal town, the town had a movie theater, a barber shop, a few small grocery stores, drug store etc. acknowledging it was a neat little town. Now it has grown into a beautiful little town and reminded everyone it was voted the prettiest town in North Carolina, which is pretty good since there are still some pretty nice towns near here. She found the applicant's presentation a little confusing though as they showed on the diagram they got a variance for this but that isn't really what it is, so what they showed today is not very accurate. In her opinion it's certainly not an asset to the area as the architecture doesn't blend and it's completely out of the character of the town. She noted, if allowed, we will no longer be the prettiest little town in North Carolina and it would be a terrible first impression driving into town. Ms. Baker concluded with the town has always been fortunate in the past that Town Council has protected what our town looks like and she the hopes Council uses their good judgement to prevent this from being built.

Jamie Dixie 193 Norwood Circle – explained when Mr. Snyder spoke and mentioned Chetola it made her think she wanted to ask two questions people have asked her and she didn't know the answer to. At the Planning Board meeting someone from Chetola got up and spoke for twenty minutes or so advocating for the project. She stated she listened back to the meeting two (2) or three (3) times trying to figure out exactly what that was all about and she didn't know. She further explained that people have asked her if there is some connection between Chetola and this developer and she wasn't sure why

he was advocating for the developer as she would think it would be competition for Chetola.

Mayor Sellers stated he really didn't have an answer and his thoughts were the owner of Chetola spoke in favor as he has different thoughts, a different mindset and opinion to the project.

Sandy Womble 285 Misty Ridge Lane – agreed with Mr. Miller that this is a huge project and seems to be lacking a lot of detail. She mentioned right out of the gate they have asked for concessions to height and to a parking deficit which can set a precedence for future development. She concurs with Mr. Miller that if the applicant can give a full scope drawing with details that might sit better with the community. She concluded there was no FAR information on this and no agenda packet she could find for everyone to look at in the minutes and those are basic things that residents should be entitled to.

Marty Landau 193 Edgewood Path – stated this isn't really Blowing Rock, not the Blowing Rock that she was born in and grew up in. She further stated this doesn't really address the shortage of housing in Blowing Rock for working people and felt like that was a big thing that needs to be addressed in this town. Ms. Landau explained there are a lot of restaurants in this area having a hard time getting staff because they don't have a place to live close enough. She thinks that is something that should really be looking at. She noted this project doesn't fit the of Blowing Rock we are use to. She concluded with she has lived in Blowing Rock for a really long time, moved to Wilmington and this reminds her of the things being built in Wilmington. She reiterated the need to address places for people to live who work here.

Mayor Sellers read two letters that had been submitted by; Warren Cathcart, owner of Chetola and Mr. and Mrs. Greg Wilson, Elliott Circle – Hillwinds Estates.

With no further public comments, Council Member Gherini made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Council Perry. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Sellers stated growing up in Blowing Rock he's seen a lot of changes, and those changes will continue with growth and expansion. He feels like with going to conditional rezoning of this property, the applicant should submit a plan for the whole property, not just for the one building. Mayor Sellers stated this is strictly his opinion and not the Council's opinion, but he thinks it's too tall, it's too large, it has the appearance of an apartment complex, or a hotel and it is at the entrance of our town. He thinks the developers are smart enough to have the vision to take this back, revise and bring back something the Council likes and he is hopeful that would happen.

Council Member Harwood thanked Oakhill Management for taking on this project and noted that much like Green Park Inn this is a very under-utilized piece of property and has been for some time. He acknowledged he was glad to see someone take a stab at it. Council Member Harwood stated the applicant has assembled a really great team which has nothing but the up most respect for Mr. Trew, Ms. Coffey and Mr. Dixon. He noted they are

a stellar team.

Council Member Harwood asked Mr. Barefoot if Oakhill had done any redevelopments like this before and if so what the outcome was.

Mr. Barefoot stated they have not done anything like this on this scale before.

Council Member Gherini thanked everyone who sent emails and messages. He agreed with Mayor Sellers on the master plan and stated he wasn't ready to move forward on phase one (1)A without seeing a master plan first. He further stated he doesn't think phase one (1)A represents Blowing Rock as it's out of scale and maybe if they could come back with the buildings separated out a little that would make it more desirable. He noted personally the current proposal doesn't do anything for him.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson stated he would like to see it down scaled a bit as well as see a master plan. He understood the idea is to enhance the shops and he would really like to see what that plan will be. He additionally would like some part of the redevelopment to be housing that is affordable for the workforce in town as well as see a whole comprehensive plan. He explained looking at the current plan it just looks like one large building and he doesn't think there are enough trees to shade the view of that large of a building coming down Valley Blvd.

Council Member Harwood stated the master concept nearly triple the built area of what is at the shopping center now, with a seasonal economy he asked Mr. Barefoot if they had done a market study that would support this kind of demand.

Mr. Barefoot stated one of his teammates is leading up the market study and not just looking at what the demand is here in Blowing Rock, but for the whole high country. Part of their phase one (1)A is to validate and make sure they aren't missing the mark. He further explained the team has tried to give a site plan to show the overall, but without getting so deep because of the unknown. Mr. Barefoot stated it's taken them a year to get to this point and it takes time and money to do plans, they don't want to waste money on potential plans just yet as the plans could change.

Mr. Barefoot understands the desire for a master plan, but thought it had been solved with what is on the ground. He noted they are open to share more, but he doesn't have a "crystal ball" to know what is going to be needed down the road. He acknowledged the dilemma is it's a big project and not knowing all the answers yet as to how many shops and how many restaurants there will be yet until they get deeper into the project.

Mr. Barefoot explained they do have a business that is running on the property currently and his company is trying to figure out how to phase the redevelopment. He expressed the want to keep the shops alive, as they have no plans on going in and terminating leases and bulldozing the buildings. Mr. Barefoot explained they have to figure out those phases and how to keep operating while also doing construction.

Council Member Gherini spoke to Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson's point and asked if they had any thoughts or comments on workforce housing.

Mr. Barefoot stated that question had been asked of him recently and his thoughts are being open to discussing what that means. He further stated workforce housing means a lot of different things in a lot of different places, so he wanted to understand the ask and couldn't comment either way without fully understanding the request.

Council Member Harwood asked how Mr. Barefoot thought this project aligns with the Town's comprehensive plan.

Mr. Barefoot explained his understanding of the comprehensive plan is trying to work with the owners of some of the larger parcels of land, which they happened to be one of, and proactively work with them to have a plan and a vision for the future.

Council Member Perry stated she appreciated the developers taking their time to not rush through the project, having had meetings, including at least one person on the team that is local and has that local perspective. She also appreciated them listening to what the community and the planners have said for the town, however she thinks "we" can do better. Admitting she is not a developer; she thinks that the mass and scale of this first phase is not conducive with the town. She stated even though it may seem like it's on the outskirts of town, it's not, and it is a very prominent structure and piece of property coming in from the North.

Council Member Perry recognized many people have said this project is not Blowing Rock, "it doesn't look like Blowing Rock", and while many may think "what is Blowing Rock", in her opinion Blowing Rock is an eclectic mix but if you look at Main Street you can still see the thread that connects the look and creates the look and charm of Blowing Rock. She explained the town has a subcommittee that has been working since last April on revising the town's ordinances and zoning districts. She noted they are almost finished with the aesthetic nature, but still need to work on size, scale and mass.

Council Member Perry expressed her dislike for phase one (1)A as presented, she suggested tweaks that can be done such as breaking into multiple buildings and using different types of materials to make it have a more rustic look that fits in with the environment. She stated there are issues with the number of parking spaces and she's researched the short-term rental piece and felt it would draw a lot of investors that buy units to rent. She further stated that currently with all the rooms in hotels, inns and short-term rentals located in town there about 1,540 rooms that can be rented. She suggested the need for a market research and capacity of how many short term rentals town can handle.

Council Member Harwood felt there is a direction, but in his opinion Council needs to provide the developer with more of that direction. He asked for more information on the phasing and explained he would be more comfortable with Phase one (1)A if he knew more about future phases and he does understand that depends on other factors

including how well phase one (1)A does, what comes back in terms of market study etc. He further asked if any thought had been given to how phasing may play out in terms of time line with square footage, number of buildings etc., and to give a little insight into all that.

Mr. Barefoot explained in his ideal world there would be a couple of mixed use buildings North of the proposed building, to allow relocating tenants and vacate more of the shopping center. He explained they will have to entice tenants to stay and “sign up for something that is going to be later and then build that later” so they can move, tear down more and repeat. The southern portion (would be directly as you come into the property on the right) would be another space, his current thought is potentially eight (8) buildings. He further explained this factor is going to depend on tenants with strong opinions as to whether they think they can stay open with construction going on or not. This will also depend on how to configure the parking lot and safety for the public during the construction process. He stated while they don’t have a “magic plan”, this is best prediction right now.

Council Member Harwood asked if they were denied tonight, does Mr. Barefoot think he could come back at a future date with more information about the phases, potential percentages of different uses they would be targeting and/or commit to if there were some concessions on Council’s part such as parking or other things that both parties may be able to collaborate with them on something like workforce housing in the future.

Mr. Barefoot stated he felt like all those things were on the table and he is most curious about what so many have said with it doesn’t feel like Blowing Rock and he doesn’t know how to go from that. He welcome feedback to get closer to the look of Blowing Rock. He referenced Mr. John Winkler’s statement the previous Council meeting in regards to the Green Park Inn, stating it has to make business sense. Mr. Barefoot agreed his team feels the same with this project. Mr. Barefoot welcomed feedback and specific direction on what would make their project more desirable for the town. He noted they are open to a lot, just need some understanding what is being asked of them and asked for a chance be given to discuss internally and then come up with a plan that works.

Council Member Harwood agreed with Mr. Barefoot at least on his part with a willingness to collaborate and find a happy medium that works for the town, for the community, that is aesthetically pleasing, while understanding it is not going to please everyone. He noted he makes a living trying to figure out what Blowing Rock looks like and he can’t tell him what that looks like as the town has arts and crafts, contemporary homes etc. He stated at the end of the day, the town has a design standards that tries to get to the core of that in terms of natural materials, nature blending colors things of that nature. He commended Mr. Barefoot for actually taken a stab at all those things. He suggested a larger discussion be had with staff for the fine tuning on what has already begun.

Council Member Harwood would personally love to see what intended uses they are looking at; retail, restaurants, offices and would like to see that nailed down. He thinks there is probably four (4) or five (5) use categories, sub uses, inside of those. He

explained his thoughts; restaurants with indoor dining, outdoor dining – those types of sub-categories. He would like to see a percentage with each of those uses; example retail a maximum of 40%, explaining those types of things to “zone” in on what Council can expect in future phases would be extremely helpful to him. He suggested in terms of phase one (1) A the aesthetics has already been discussed, but what he thinks people are having a hard time with is the size as it’s roughly four hundred (400) feet in length. He further suggested breaking that up into two (2) or three (3) one hundred twenty (120) foot buildings that would help bring into a scale that is more comfortable and keeping with the character of the town.

Council Member Perry asked why the developer thinks this property is underutilized.

Mr. Barefoot explained this is going to have to go vertical to have some density, as there aren’t many flat parcels of land anywhere up here in the area. He thinks this is a valuable piece of property and feels like it needs to have some density to make sense.

Council Member Perry acknowledged she knew they had looked at a lot of scenarios but asked if they had looked at adding a second story to the existing buildings to provide that density.

Mr. Barefoot stated the team discussed that when they first started planning this redevelopment, but tabled it pretty quickly as they were advised that is not the direction they should look at going.

After further discussion regarding plans for retaining current tenants and future plans for potential tenants, Council Member Gherini made a motion to table until a future date, seconded by Council Member Pickett.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked Mr. Barefoot if Council had given enough guidance to help going forward.

Mr. Barefoot stated they can provide percentages of use, a representation of architecture and narrow that into where everyone is comfortable. He feels there are things his team can provide to show the direction they are heading which seems to be what the community wants. He noted having every use specified will not be that quick and would be hard to jump forward four (4) years and know what it is going to be.

Council Member Harwood stated he would vote no on tabling the project as well as vote no on the proposal as presented and would suggest doing so to allow the applicant come back when and if they are ready. He explained his thought was it puts it back in the applicant’s court rather than keeping it on a rolling basis.

Town Attorney Joey Petrack advised he thought it would be cleaner to go with the motion to table until a future date.

Council Member Gherini's motion to table until a future date stood. For the motion: Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson, Council Members Pickett and Gherini; Against the motion: Council Members Harwood and Perry. The motion passed.

Council took a ten-minute recess

OFFICIAL REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers – Thanked Town staff for all their hard work.
- Council Member Perry – None.
- Council Member Harwood – None.
- Council Member Pickett – None.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson – Thanked everyone who attended the High Country Council of Government Annual Banquet on March 7th.
- Council Member Gherini – Thanked Officer Gunnells and the Fire EMT's that helped him recently when he fell on the ice and got hurt. Economic Development meeting will be on March 20th at 1:00 p.m. at Appalachian Ski Mountain. Congratulations to Heather Norris who was selected at the new Chancellor of Appalachian State University.
- Town Attorney Joey Petrack – Two weeks he will be attending the North Carolina School of Government Municipal Attorney Conference.
- Town Manager Shane Fox – Gave updates on Main Street, Maple Street and 221 Water/Sewer work, FEMA update – Wonderland Trail and Valley View Road, Sunset Drive – crosswalks, Trout Derby has been moved to May 3rd, Planning Board meeting is March 20th, Memorial Park second phase will begin mid-March and traffic on Wallingford will have a different route beginning Monday, March 24th.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:10 p.m. Council Member Perry made a motion to go into closed session, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:50 p.m. Council Member Perry made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

Budget Amendment – 2025-05 – Attachment A

Reimbursement Resolution 2025 – Attachment B

Resolution – Post Helene Support for Small Business – Attachment C