

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
April 8, 2025

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 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, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Police Chief Nathan Kirk, Landscape Director Cory Cathcart, 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

MINUTE APPROVAL

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made the motion to approve the minutes from March 11, 2025, regular and closed session, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

Council Member Gherini made a motion to adopt the regular agenda, seconded by Council Member Harwood.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Blue Ridge Conservancy 5K**
- 2. Memorial Park Project Ordinance – 2025-02**

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

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Jamie Dixey 193 Norwood Circle – Asked if the results of the Downtown Standards survey from the Downtown Sub-Committee could be published.

REGULAR AGENDA

- 1. Blowing Rock Tour of Homes Patron Party**

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated the Blowing Rock Tour of Homes is

requesting the use of the lower level of the parking deck at BRAHM on Tuesday, July 15, 2025. They would like to set up early on July 15th and have it reopened on July 16th by noon. The upper parking deck will be open for public parking, and Rumble Memorial Church will also permit them to use their parking lot during the event. The application has been reviewed by department heads. If generators are used, they will need to be inspected, and permits will be required for alcohol consumption.

Mr. John Jordan, co-chair of the event stated they would like to amend slightly and ask for exclusive use of the lower parking deck beginning on Monday, July 14th at 8:00 a.m. as the party is on Tuesday, July 15th and release the access by noon on Wednesday, July 16th. Mr. Jordan reiterated Rumble Memorial Presbyterian Church has agreed to offset the parking lost during the event. He noted his organization would take responsibility for any signage. Mr. Jordan explained they planned to pay two (2) off-duty uniformed Blowing Rock Police officers during the party on the evening of July 15th from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked where the band would be located.

Mr. Jordan stated there would not be a band this year, instead they will have music that will be light background music to focus more on conversations during the event.

Council Member Harwood asked Mr. Jordan to elaborate more on the need to use the parking deck from July 14th to July 16th as that is the height of the town's season.

Mr. Jordan stated they are sensitive to that, but it is a large-scale party that will likely have as many as two hundred (200) people in attendance. They will have catering tables, lighting, décor, etc to set up. He explained with the timing for delivery of the items and set up the extra time would be helpful. Mr. Jordan further stated if need be they could cut the time and go with the request of July 15th beginning at 8:00 a.m. to July 16th at noon.

Council Member Harwood asked if they had collaborated with BRAHM.

Mr. Jordan stated they had and the BRHAM Director, Stephan Dragisic has given his blessing and is involved directly with the planning of the event. He explained they are doing this in many ways to highlight and inner focus on Blowing Rock. He explained the Tour of Homes is looking very closely at who their neighbors are and who will help them achieve their goals of the event each year. BRAHM, Rumble and Saint Mary's of the Hills are natural fits, and their intent is to spotlight that little part of the town.

Council Member Pickett asked about the restrooms and if they planned on using the ones inside of BRHAM since they will not be using the public restrooms.

Mr. Jordan explained the plan is to utilize the ones inside of BRAHM as well as bring in some portable restrooms so they can stay self-servicing and self-contained.

Council Member Harwood stated the Tour of Homes is an excellent event that raises a lot

of money annually that goes to several local organizations and is a great event for the town to be associated with and he made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

2. CUP 2006-02 Hanna Family Trust – Minor Amendment – Parking

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock introduced the request of the Hanna Family for a minor amendment to the original CUP 2006-02 approved for the Hanna Family Trust project. When approved the project required twenty-one (21) parking spaces and none could be provided on site. The CUP authorized the Hanna Family to pay \$180,000 into the Town's Parking Fund for the eighteen (18) retail parking spaces while three (3) residential spaces were provided on the former Snips property off Laurel Lane owned by the Hanna Family. Eventually that property was sold and the three (3) spaces were reserved at the Hanna home property at 1126 Main Street.

Dr. Hanna is requesting the opportunity to allow payment into the Parking Fund for the three (3) residential parking spaces at \$15,000 per space for a total of \$45,000 and eliminate the residential parking requirement included as condition No. 12 of the original CUP.

Others that have paid into the Parking Fund in addition to the Hanna Family include:

- Gaines Kiker \$30,000 for three (3) spaces at Morris St project
- Rob Dyer \$10,000 for one space at former Maple Lodge

Attorney Chelsea Garrett spoke on behalf of the applicant. She highlighted when the project was initially approved in 2005, the town required twenty-one (21) parking spaces and Dr. Hanan paid \$180,000 into the parking fund for eighteen (18) spaces at that time. The additional three (3) spaces were designed on a property owned by an affiliated entity and are located behind the building where Blowing Rock Real Estate and the Funky Tulip are located now.

Ms. Garrett explained there are two apartments, both of which are rented long-term. Based on the current circumstances of the property and the current town parking options and regulations, the applicant does not believe removing the three (3) spaces (which are satellite spaces) from the Special Use Permit and will not create a hardship for anyone.

Mayor Pro-tem Matheson made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

3. Workforce Housing Discussion

Town Manager Shane Fox explained staff would like Council to openly discuss Workforce Housing and options that may be available for the Town to study and consider.

The Towns of Chapel Hill and Davidson comprehensive plans and development ordinances require workforce housing to be integrated in various residential development proposals.

Other communities across NC use overlay districts to encourage or incentivize the reservation of workforce housing in development projects. Still others add flexibility to their zoning ordinances allowing a wider range of housing choices in traditionally single-family zoning districts. For example, allowing accessory dwelling units in all zoning districts or allowing duplex or triplex in lower density zoning districts. Some have even removed any residential density limitations across their entire jurisdiction.

Additionally, representatives in the NC General Assembly have recently introduced bills that would allow “middle housing” in all zoning districts in all local government jurisdictions, thus forcing cities and towns to follow directives of the legislators.

Town staff would like Council direction in the important topic of workforce housing that might ensure the local workforce has some affordable housing options in the future.

Town Manager Fox explained in North Carolina, workforce housing refers to affordable housing options designed for households earning up to a certain percentage of the area median income (AMI), typically between 60% and 120%, to help support middle-income workers and families. He further explained some who would benefit from workforce housing would be essential workers; including police officers, firefighters, teachers, healthcare workers, retail/restaurant staff and town employees.

Manager Fox stated workforce housing can help attract and retain essential workers and by ensuring workers can afford to live in the community, workforce housing can contribute to economic development and stability by ensuring that workers can afford to live in the community. He further stated in Watauga County the Median household income is \$51,300. That would mean to follow the 30% rule – housing costs should comprise no more than 30% of gross household income- the mortgage payment would be \$1,284 monthly.

Manager Fox noted the average home sold in Blowing Rock was \$888,000 and a 1,200 to 2,000 square foot home sold for \$793,000. He further noted that the average mortgage payment on \$793,000 is \$4,468 and income needed to meet the 30% rule would mean an annual salary of \$179,000.

Manager Fox stated Representative Ray Pickett has sponsored House Bill 306, currently in committee, which would allow workforce housing to be provided. He further stated the Town of Boone, Watauga County and the Watauga County School System have all joined this bill as well.

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock discussed Overlay Districts as seen in cities like Greensboro and Charlotte. He explained overlay districts provide relaxed zoning restrictions to encourage higher density housing or provide incentives for developers for housing in certain areas.

Council discussed at length and directed the Planning Board to review and discuss further at their April meeting and gather more examples from similar towns to provide more information for Council to move forward with next steps.

OFFICIAL REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers – Reminded the public the calendar has the incorrect date for the May Council meeting. The meeting will be held May 13th not May 6th as in the calendar.
- Council Member Perry – None.
- Council Member Harwood – None.
- Council Member Pickett – None.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson – None.
- Council Member Gherini – None.
- Town Attorney Joey Petrack – None.
- Town Manager Shane Fox – Gave updates on Main Street, 221, Green St., FEMA update – Wonderland Trail and Valley View Road, Sunset Drive – crosswalk, Trout Derby May 3rd, Memorial Park and traffic update.

Council took a ten (10) minute recess.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:25 p.m. Council Member Perry made a motion to go into closed session, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:15 p.m. Council came out of closed session and instructed Town Manager Fox and Town Attorney Petrack to move forward with purchasing an 8.548 acre tract of land west of Tipton Lane. With no further action, Member Gherini made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

Reimbursement Resolution 2025 – Attachment A

CUP 2006-02 – Hanna Family Trust – Attachment B

Resolution – Purchase & Contract – Jones Lot #2021-01 – Attachment C

Deed for the Jones AKA “Tipton Property” – Attachment D