

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
May 13, 2025

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 13, 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, 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 May 13, 2025, regular and closed session, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Financial Audit Contract**
- 2. Tax Release – 2024-07**
- 3. Budget Amendment – 2024-12**
- 4. Bennett Property – RZ 2025-01 – R-15 to HSG**
- 5. Proclamation – Mental Health**
- 6. Amended Project Ordinance 2025-03 – Memorial Park Improvement Project**

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

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Sandy Hogan – 1041 Green Hill Rd wanted to know if any progress has been made on the parking issue in town. Ms. Hogan explained she loves to shop locally downtown, but it is

very difficult to find a parking spot unless you time it accurately. She stated she hasn't heard parking discussed lately and while she knows suggestions have been made, she would like to suggest and encourage the Town to look into revenue bonds to finance a parking garage.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Chamber Update

Newly hired Chamber Director Robin Miller introduced herself as well as her staff and gave some background information on herself. Ms. Miller just completed her first ninety (90) days with the Chamber and wanted to update on progress and give a little insight on the Chamber moving forward.

2. Parking Enforcement Update

Police Chief Nathan Kirk reviewed some of the suggested updates to the parking enforcement suggested by Ms. McLaurin at the winter retreat. He further reviewed a company called Passport Parking he and Telecommunications Supervisor Cassandra Reid have been in discussions with.

Chief Kirk stated he currently has posted for two (2) part time parking ambassadors and if Council is in agreement, he is ready to interview and proceed with hiring.

Council Member Perry asked for a list of all the benefits Passport would provide for their service.

Mayor Sellers asked if there was money in the current budget to support contracting with Passport Parking.

Manager Fox stated it was not in the current budget, however there was money in the current budget that had not been spent yet and could potentially be used to pay for the remainder of the year if so desired.

Mayor Sellers asked if Passport provided the signage.

Chief Kirk explained signage would not be part of this and would have to be provided by the town.

Manager Fox estimated the cost of signage to be approximately \$1,000 or slightly less.

Chief Kirk further explained upfront cost to get started with Passport would be roughly \$2,600 and then the monthly cost going forward would be approximately \$1,000 a month for software fees.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson stated he thought the handhelds had been budgeted for in the current year.

Manager Fox explained those had not been budgeted for because no decision had been

made to move forward on parking at that time and therefore no need to budget for equipment the town wasn't going to purchase at that time.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson thought at the winter retreat Council had discussed going ahead and marking off the spaces Main Street will be losing due to NCDOT paving the road.

Manager Fox stated as soon as there are some warmer days with no rain, staff will get those spots marked.

Mayor Sellers asked if Passport handled paid parking operations.

Chief Kirk stated they do and this would just be phase one (1) and if Council would like to move forward with paid parking it would be much easier to roll that out with this first step being completed.

Chief Kirk requested Council to proceed with phase one (1) with Passport for the initial cost of \$2,600 for equipment, the cost of \$1,000 per month for the software subscription and start interviewing to hire parking ambassadors.

Manager Fox noted if any changes are going to be made to the current ordinance, Council would need to hold a public hearing at the June 10th Council meeting to discuss the changes to the parking. He explained the proposed changes discussed at the winter retreat, which Chief Kirk re-capped, would be the changes presented at that public hearing.

Manager Fox explained in the mean time, staff can move forward with hiring the parking enforcement staff and continue enforcement based on the current parking ordinance that is from August 8, 2023. He would also ask to hold off on signage until after the June 10th meeting to make sure it is reflective of what takes place during that meeting.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked if enforcement would start Memorial Day as it has in years past.

Chief Kirk stated he actually started enforcing Mother's Day weekend as he had done last year due to that being when town starts getting busier.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made a motion to approve hiring personnel needed to enforce the current parking ordinance, seconded by Council Member Perry. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Perry made a motion to set a public hearing for June 10th and for Council to discuss contracting with Passport Parking and discuss changes to the parking ordinance, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

3. 2025-2026 Budget Presentation

Town Manager Shane Fox presented the proposed 2025-2026 proposed budget via power-point presentation. The budget work session will be held on May 27th at 1:00 p.m., a Public Hearing and potential adoption will be held on June 10th at 6:00 p.m.

OFFICIAL REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers – Thanked Finance Director Tasha Brown, Town Manager Shane Fox and all the department heads for their hard work on the budget, thanked TDA Executive Tracy Brown for making the town so much money in the TDA revenues, thanked the citizens for being patient as they worked through the budget, he also recognized Police week.
- Council Member Perry – Asked for the survey (the subcommittee put out in late 2024-early 2025) those results be put online. She mentioned a lot of comments were about the awnings downtown being dirty and so forth and thought Council needed to consider addressing.
- Council Member Harwood – Manager Fox, several Town Council Members and himself attended the CityVision Conference put on the NC League of Municipalities for Managers and Elected Officials. He stated the response you get from others when you mention you are from Blowing Rock is amazing. He came back with a lot of pride being from this community and knowing how well this town is run and what a great community we are. He felt that gets “lost in the noise” and stepping out of this community and hearing the trials and tribulations other towns have to deal with that we here in Blowing Rock do not have to deal with due to our immense resources and assets. He stated he wanted to “pat ourselves” on the back for a job well done.
- Council Member Pickett – Thanked Manager Fox and Ms. Brown for their hard work on the budget. She also thanked Public Works, as she knows they have had some long hard nights with the weather lately. She commented the town has a wonderful staff and she is thankful for all of them.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson – Thanked Manager Fox and Ms. Brown for their work on the budget. He also concurred with Council Member Harwood on his thought towards the CityVision conference. He was pleased with the turnout for this event and thought a lot of good came out of the classes attended and felt Council did a good job of dividing and conquering on those classes to absorb all there was to offer.
- Council Member Gherini – The day prior he and Manager Fox attended the Governors Advisory Commission meeting and listened for two and a half hours on what is going on in the state and all the repairs from the hurricane. He gave the agenda to Town Clerk Hilari Hubner to add to the record. The Economic Development meeting will be held on May 15th at 1:00 p.m. in the County Commissioners office.
- Town Attorney Joey Petrack – None.
- Town Manager Shane Fox – Gave updates on Green Street & Maple Street paving, FEMA update – Green Hill Woods & Valley View, Sunset Drive crosswalk completed, Memorial Park & Traffic, Childcare Center continues to be a big success. He was asked to speak to a childcare task force the Governor has put together on the process of opening, running and the success of the childcare

facility, the first Art in the Park of the season will be Saturday, the 17th. Council took a ten (10) minute recess.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:40 p.m. Council Member Perry made a motion to go into closed session, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:10 p.m. Council came out of closed session and instructed Town Manager Fox and Town Attorney Petrack to move forward with purchasing a .81 acre tract of land from the Blowing Rock Conference Center which is adjacent from Tipton Lane property the Town purchased last month. 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

Financial Audit Contract – Attachment A
Tax Release – 2024-07 – Attachment B
Budget Amendment – Attachment C
Mental Health Proclamation – Attachment D
Amended Project Ordinance 2025-03 – Attachment E