

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
September 9, 2025

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 9, 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, Town Engineer Jared Wright, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Police Chief Nathan Kirk, Public Works Director Matt Blackburn, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Finance Director Tasha Brown, IT Director Thomas Steele, Landscape Director Cory Cathcart 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 August 12, 2025, regular session and closed session, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Budget Amendment - #2025-17**
- 2. Fireworks Permit – Blowing Rock Country Club**
- 3. Daughters of the American Revolution Proclamation for Constitution Week**

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

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Lee Rocamora – 300 Laurel Park Road spoke regarding safety concerns in his neighborhood. He explained he and his neighbors have had numerous incidents walking and/or in vehicles with near miss collisions at the blind intersection of Laurel Park Road and Dogwood Lane. Mr. Rocamora made a request for Council to consider putting a 3-way stop at this intersection for safety purposes. Mr. Rocamora gave Town Clerk Hilari

Hubner a petition from the residents of Laurel Park backing this request.

Burr Collier – 323 Stone Cliff Drive - President of the Blowing Rock Horse Show expressed his immense gratitude towards the Town Staff and Town Council for their help with parking of horse trailers and equipment for this year's horse show. He explained there were some road issues with the normal area on Edmisten Road. He further expressed his sincere gratitude to all of town staff for being willing to help whenever the Horse Show Foundation needed something and specifically thanked Public Works Director Matt Blackburn and noted he is always willing to help, and the foundation sincerely appreciates him.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

BRAHM Executive Director Stephen Dragisic made the Council and public aware of an event on Saturday, September 20th. He stated this event will be a Hurricane Helene Listening Day in remembrance of Hurricane Helene. Interview sessions will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will be broadcast on WFDD radio station two weeks after the event and noted the recordings will be preserved in three (3) ways. Later that day a Documentary Film Screening will take place at 2:00 p.m. This program is made possible through the ArtsAVL Hurricane Helene Business Relief Grant.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Debt Approval - \$2.25 Million

Manager Shane Fox presented the background information on the debt request and installment loan process. At the July 8, 2025 Town Council meeting the Town Council voted unanimously to move forward with the solicitation of bids for an installment loan for \$2.25 million. The installment loan proceeds are to be used to reimburse the Town for the purchase of two parcels of land for future public safety and infrastructure needs, along with the third and final phase of the Memorial Park projects, and lastly to replace the roof of Fire Station #1. Collateral for the \$2.25 million loan will be the recently debt-free Fire Station #1.

The Town publicly advertised and solicited bids on July 15th with all bids due by August 5th. We received a total of 6 qualified bids, with a low bid received from JP Morgan Chase with terms of ten (10) years at the 3.55% interest rate. Staff recommends the Town Council approve the low bid received from JP Morgan Chase for a term of ten (10) years at a 3.55% interest rate.

Mayor Sellers opened the public hearing, with no questions or comments, Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Council Member Gherini.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson made a motion to approve the low bid from JP Morgan Chase for a ten year term at the 3.55% rate, seconded by Council Member Pickett. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Art in the Park

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown stated the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce submitted a request to host Art in the Park on Park Avenue for the next five (5) years. The event would occur one (1) Saturday per month, beginning in May and concluding in October each year.

The application was reviewed by the appropriate department heads. While the request has been duly evaluated, concerns regarding the proposed use of Park Avenue have been identified. These concerns, along with the Special Event Application and proposed dates were attached for Council review and consideration.

Council Member Harwood asked how long Art in the Park has been held on Park Avenue.

Ms. Brown stated it had been held on Park Avenue for approximately fifteen (15) years.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson expressed his reservations for the five (5) year request. He explained a lot of things can happen in five (5) years and felt that was too long. He further explained he knew the Police Department had some concerns and had some suggestions going forward and knew conversations had been had with the potential to move to a new location in the near future. In his opinion was five (5) years could cause problems, he didn't mind having a year to year approval, but didn't want to tie it up for five (5) years.

Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Robin Miller stated she had met with Manager Fox and Police Chief Nathan Kirk in February to discuss some of the challenges and obstacles of Art in the Park and look at some solutions. She further stated one of the things she had done was to eliminate twenty (20) booths going from ninety (90) artist to seventy (70) booths to relieve some of the pressure on the Police building and Public Works. Ms. Miller felt making that change had made for a smoother process for loading and unloading artists.

Council Member Harwood noted he thought the event process operated flawlessly as he had observed both the set up and the breakdown. He further asked Ms. Miller to enlighten Council as to what Art in the Park means to the Chamber as far as revenue and where that revenue goes.

Ms. Miller explained the Chamber is funded through Membership dues as well as non-dues revenue. She further explained the Chamber heavily relies on the non-dues revenue Art in the Park and Symphony By The Lake at Chetola are the two highest non-dues revenue sources for the Chamber. Ms. Miller stated that money goes to operations and Art in the Park is a very intensive event as staff starts about 5:00 a.m. and doesn't end until about 7:30 p.m. This event also creates jobs for the pop up businesses, when surveyed 57% of business responses are Art in the Park generates more business in the community on Art in the Park days.

Mayor Sellers noted Rumple takes donations for parking on Art in the Park days and

sometimes gets approximately \$1,000 or more on those days in donations which go back to the community.

Council Member Gherini thanked Ms. Miller for her comments and felt everything she had to say was spot on. He then stated he agreed with Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson and wasn't comfortable with going five (5) years out.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson noted he is very much in favor of Art in the Park, but was under the impression other options were being explored to relocate and take some pressure off the Police Department.

Ms. Miller stated the Chamber's minds are open but currently don't have a place to relocate the event. She further stated her hope was removing twenty (20) booths had helped relieve some of the burden off the Police Department.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked if there was a "opt out" for the Town or the Blowing Rock Chamber.

Town Manager Shane Fox commented there was not, but that was an option if Council would like to add that.

Council Member Harwood made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson for discussion.

Council Member Harwood acknowledged Chief Kirk's comments and wanted to make sure there could be some sort of command ground met.

Chief Kirk noted he's had concerns for a long time with the location and it's all due to safety issues. He explained if someone needs to come to the police department on an Art in the Park Day, they cannot get there easily. He further explained he understands the challenges the Chamber is facing with finding another location but really is concerned from a safety standpoint.

Council Member Gherini felt with hearing Chief Kirks concerns highlighted why a three (3) year contract is better than five (5) year as it allows for more flexibility to find a different option and commended the Chamber for the efforts they are taking to make that happen someday.

Council Member Harwood asked if some of the concerns could be handled with signage, for example relocating handicap parking on Art in the Park Days or explaining how to get to the police department on those days. He stated he was just throwing ideas out to help come to a command ground to help with some concerns.

Chief Kirk felt things could be done to make Art in the Park days smoother and wanted to make it clear he isn't wanting to get rid of Art in the Park, he just would like it to be moved to a different location.

Council Member Harwood reassured Chief Kirk he knew he was doing his job.

Council Member Perry felt conflicted as she loves Art in the Park and thinks it great to have it located near the Chamber and right off Main Street. However, she also understands the challenges from a safety standpoint, and it does concern her as well. She was curious about some of the locations the Chamber had looked at and why they haven't worked out.

Ms. Miller stated it was the community. She explained as soon as the word got out the Chamber was looking into other locations it became an issue and rather than being a positive conversation it became a negative one. She reiterated that the Chamber is more than willing to explore a new location, but the community needs to help with positive solutions as opposed to the negative. The Chamber is not trying to get rid of Art in the Park but trying to come up with a new location for the event and need positive collaborative solutions.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson asked Council Harwood if he would amend his motion to put a "opt out" clause for both the Town and the Chamber.

Council Member Pickett asked what the purpose of adding that clause would be.

Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson felt it would make it easier for either party to opt out if a new location became available or if the Town needed to because of emergency services reasons.

Council Member Pickett asked why the Chamber wouldn't just be able to come back before Council to address it at that time.

After further discussion, Council Member Harwood noted he was sympathetic to the request, but felt the Chamber needed to know they had a definite place to have Art in the Park for the designated years set by Council.

Council Member Harwood amended his motion to approve the request for a three (3) year term, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson. Unanimously approved.

OFFICIAL REPORTS & COMMENTS

- Mayor Sellers – Encouraged everyone in the next few weeks with the upcoming election to please be cordial, kind and respectful to everyone.
- Council Member Perry – Has met with Mayor Pro-Tem Matheson to discuss parking solutions – one being a shuttle service. She was on Main Street over the weekend conducting an informal survey on if people would be willing to use a shuttle service if it was provided. She noted 85% of the people she talked with stated they would be willing to.
- 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 an update on Main Street Paving, Maple Street and Green Street, Memorial Park, Valley View Rd from Helene damage, Town Audit and the Flood Maps.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:00 p.m. Council Member Perry made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11.(a)(5) – discussion of potential property acquisition, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:25 p.m. Council returned to open session. With no further action, Council Member Perry made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

Budget Amendment #2025-17 – Attachment A

Daughters of the American Revolution Proclamation – Attachment B

Debt Approval – Attachment C

Art in the Park – 3 year Renewal – Attachment D