



MINUTES

Regular Town Council Meeting

4:00 PM - Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Council Chambers

The Regular Town Council of the Town of Beech Mountain was called to order on Tuesday, March 8, 2022, at 4:00 PM, in the Council Chambers, with the following members present:

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Barry Kaufman
Vice Mayor Jimmie Accardi
Councilmember Weidner Abernethy
Councilmember Kelly Melang
Councilmember Erin Gonyea

COUNCIL EXCUSED:

STAFF PRESENT: Attorney Stacy Eggers, IV
Town Clerk Tamara Mercer

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2.1. Mayor Kaufman requested a motion to adopt the agenda.

3. INVOCATION- DEWEY CYCLONE BRETT

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1. Mr. Ben Swadley 207 N. Pinnacle Ridge Road thanked Council as the new Parks and Recreation board member. He commented on the new development in the area of the sledding hill, specifically the paid parking lot. He understands now why it was needed for families as the sled hill is packed and the lot is necessary for vehicle parking.

Mr. Swadley requested more education about material recycling for the recycling center as to what can be recycled. Education such as 3, 4, 5 plastics that cannot be recycled will help citizen with clarity. Continue to support the trail system. Specifically, the EMO (Emerald Outback) as we still may lose the trail system after 2 years. The hiking, biking, and multi-use trails attract visitors and are needed.

6. **FEATURED LOCAL BUSINESS- SUPERLATIVE REALTY, DEBBIE CANADY**

- 6.1. Ms. Debbie Canady of Superlative Realty, who has lived on Beech Mountain since 2002, noted that her office would be moving to 502 Beech Mountain Parkway. She reviewed the residential property sales data on Beech Mountain. Ms. Canady said there is not much inventory and no end in sight for soaring prices. Only nine houses are listed. Average days on market is 36-days with most home averages listed as a three-bedroom/ three-bath at 2,200 square-feet, approximately \$382 a square-foot. The price is still higher for new construction to build. There are only five condominiums for-sale with an average of five days on the market.

Ms. Canady said she advises the public on the Town ordinances and regulations, for those purchaser who want to build new construction.

7. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- 7.1. Mayor Kaufman requested a motion to review the consent agenda.

Motion

Kelly Melang made a motion to open the Consent Agenda for review and Weidner Abernethy seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

- 7.2. Adoption of Minutes
- 7.3. 2022 C. Randolph CPA Audit and Financial Statement Contract
- 7.4. FY 2022 Budget Ordinance Amendment # 2022-04

Vice Mayor Accardi inquired about the Budget Amendments specifically the tow truck and EMS Station amendments. Mr. Pudney said the Tow Truck purchase was assigned to the Police Department. The budget ordinance amendment adjusts the purchased along with the up-fit for the \$80,000 in the budget amendment for the costs and assignment to the Police Department. Mr. Pudney also explained the 911 communications department transfer for the assisted fund. The State funds are received from the phone bill taxes applied towards our 911 system and filed as revenue. We received the State dollars, and they were spending within line item in the budget.

Mayor Kaufman inquired about the construction loan on page 41, specifically item d1a, \$59,860, to which Mr. Pudney explained the \$60,000 fund balance was used for the Pinnacle Inn mediation and settlement. He noted the post is listed under the expenditures from the Public Works Facility construction.

- 7.5. Declare 109 Greenbriar Rd Surplus Property

Councilmember Abernethy questioned the estimated value of surplus property and Attorney Eggers that this request allows staff to post the surplus

property for-sale and to advertise on GovDeals. The on-line auction closes to the highest bid. The town can accept or reject the bid as set by the minimum. We look to tax value and Realtor comparisons for the minimum.

Motion

Jimmie Accardi made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes for 7.1) January 19, 2022, and February 8, 2022 7.2) C. Randolph CPA Audit and Financial Statement Contract, 7.3) FY 2022 Budget Ordinance Amendment #2022-04, 7.4) Sell Surplus Property 109 Greenbriar Road and Erin Gonyea seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

8. TOWN MANAGER AND STAFF REPORTS

8.1. Finance Reports for the month of January

Mr. Pudney reviewed and explained the fund balance reports for line items.

8.2. Police Department Monthly Report

Mr. Pudney pointed out that the Police Department has over double the number of calls and incidents. They are extremely busy but also with critical calls, including a shooting wherein two suspects left the scene, but due to the quick and efficient officers' reaction, the suspects were arrested off the mountain.

8.3. February 2022 Recreation Report

Mr. Pudney pointed out that the Parks and Recreation Department is also extremely busy as memberships increased and participation has increased.

8.4. Planning and Inspection Report 2022-02

The Planning and Inspections Department has increased building and permitting substantially. He thanked the new Inspector, Michael Holland for quickly expediting permits in the position.

8.5. TDA March Report

Mr. Pudney stated that revenues have doubled at 4-million-dollars in gross revenues. This is the highest income ever reached.

8.6. DOI Report February 2022

The solid waste tonnage collected is down from 142-tons the previous year, down to 70.5 -tons as we have stopped commercial businesses and multi-family use dumpsters. We are controlling the waste and the solid waste trends confirms by the data.

8.7. Fire Department Monthly Report

The Fire Department has benefited from new volunteers but is also extremely busy. Mr. Pudney encouraged any new volunteers to become members.

8.8. Town Manager's Report:

Mr. Pudney reviewed the delay issues regarding the EMS Station. He noted that he has been in contact with Watauga County's Manager, Daron Geouque and with Avery County's Manager, Phil Barrier. He explained there is a delay, but that Mr. Barrier agreed to a May 1st deadline. We will start without them, but Mr. Barrier said he can work towards those dates. The Town is ready with the crews hired, medical equipment and housing in place, but we are waiting on the signed agreement from Avery County.

Mr. Pudney reviewed the following updates-

- Covid-19 All county mandates have been lifted, average cases down
- Bathrooms – Parks and Rec Plan a dedication ceremony in April for a ribbon cutting for the bathroom, parking lot and sledding hill
- Wayfinding signage underway, a mockup was produced for council to review, the overall size was reduced, and signage modified
- Working on a local bill in the State Legislature short session to continue to allow towns to regulate trees
- Planning Board to look into business license to include short-term rentals similar to Banner Elk, Boone and Blowing Rock, recommendation to Council by July 1st
- Town Council Budget workshop April 20th at Town Hall.
- Lake Coffey – engineer and pre-permitting underway.
- The BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities) Grant has been submitted and accepted. (FEMA), the NC Department of Public Safety has ranked the project near the top of their list. Cost 14-million with a 70/30 grant.
- A topographic survey including checking depths and contours of existing lakes has been completed.
- Willingness of the resource agencies to support the project to include impoundment of streams is underway. We will need assistance and support of State agencies to solve the water supply problem.
- Utility Projects Chart – project chart to better indicate the various projects and the status of each. We are experiencing a critical shortage and delay in materials, especially fittings, pipe, and components. Costs to procure what is available has increased dramatically.

Mr. Pudney and Council members discussed the Salary Study. There was a question-and-answer period regarding the timeline, continuing labor trends, employment market, COLA, and CPI (Consumer Price Index) data, budgeting, the budget process, and employee hiring and retention.

Mayor Kaufman stated that as the market may be different in six months so we should wait for 2023, to which Councilmember Abernethy disagreed and said we lose employees.

Mr. Pudney noted that the town contacted vendors for a 'salary study' quote and the North Carolina League of Municipalities' MAPS Group.

After further discussion, Mr. Pudney said will bring Staff's projected salary and benefits recommendation as well as the projected COLA, to which Councilmember Abernethy said to let employees know we are working on pay structure study for the next budget.

Mr. Pudney added that the phased dependent care costs are going up for families and spousal coverages. He explained the pay plan positions, scale grades, and peer comparisons, inflation as well as peer compression adjustments made when we can see which pay grades are high and which positions are low. He reiterated the expected COLA and CPI indexes and what they project to apply across the board.

9. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

9.1. Councilmember Gonyea was grateful for the end of winter slow down and she thanked the Police Department for traffic mitigation. She commented that we have never had so much construction in the winter and people are building in all weather conditions.

Vice Mayor Accardi pointed out the budget report wherein the Town's parking lot has produced revenue of over \$25,000. He thanked new Parks and Recreation member Mr. Ben Swadley for the suggested educational flyer idea with simple tips for recycling, that we can post just like the 'grease goblin' information.

Councilmember Abernethy commented on the recycling center. He added that the Public Works Sanitation employees also should be educated to help the citizens or bring in ASU graduate class to enhance public education program.

Councilmember Melang inquired about the old recycle center, to which Mr. Pudney said the town employees have begun landscape planting and the greenspace plan, including picnic tables at the old recycle center.

Mayor Kaufman stated that the Parks and Recreation Trails system will remain a Council focus. We will continue to improve trails and we will not give up on EMO (Emerald Outback Trails). He added that people come from Kansas to Oklahoma to experience our trails.

10. CITIZENS' AGENDA COMMENTS- NONE

11. ADJOURNMENT

- 11.1. There being no further business, Mayor Kaufman requested a motion to adjourn at 5:25 p.m.

Motion

Kelly Melang made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting and Weidner Abernethy seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

Town Clerk

Mayor, Town of Beech Mountain