



# MINUTES

## Regular Town Council Meeting

4:00 PM - Tuesday, February 11, 2025  
Council Chambers

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The Regular Town Council of the Town of Beech Mountain was called to order on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 4:00 PM, in the Council Chambers, with the following members present:

**COUNCIL PRESENT:** Mayor Weidner Abernethy  
Vice Mayor Kelly Melang  
Councilmember Alan Villanova  
Councilmember Art Beckmann  
Councilmember M.W. Stanford

**COUNCIL EXCUSED:**

**STAFF PRESENT:** Attorney Stacy Eggers, IV  
Town Manager Bob Pudney  
Town Clerk Emily Haynes

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1. Mayor Abernethy called the February 11th, 2025, Regular Town Council Meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

### 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2.1. Mayor Abernethy requested a motion to adopt the amended agenda.

#### Motion

Kelly Melang made a motion to adopt the amended agenda M.W. Stanford seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

### 3. INVOCATION- DEWEY CYCLONE BRETT

### 4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### 5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1. Mayor Abernethy welcomed Seth Felman. Seth stated how proud he is to be a resident of Beech; I first came here in 1969 as a little boy. I'm here to tell you about the new 5 story Hilton Hotel coming to the base of Sugar Mountain. The

hotel will have 3,000 feet of meeting room space for parties, meetings and weddings, an indoor swimming pool, and many other amenities. I'm happy that this got approved to be a part of Sugar Mountain. If any questions feel free to ask.

Mayor Abernethy thanked previous Vice Mayor Jimmie Acardi for attending the council meeting and continuing being involved with the town.

Freddy Harris of 126 Wintergreen Way- May of 2023 during a summer thunderstorm rainwater overwhelmed the drainage ditch on Beech Mountain Parkway at the intersection of Hummingbird Lane. This location directs water under the gravel road instead of coming down Beech Mountain Parkway it goes into a pipe that is then positioned to flow across the properties facing Wintergreen Way, I live on that road. At this point the water is directed into a ditch then directed into three pipes under Wintergreen Way Road then onto my property. This arrangement has caused severe damage to my property and erosion to both my property and the ditch on Wintergreen Way. I've made the town aware of this on several occasions, one occasion the flow of the water from one thunderstorm was enough to remove nearly half of Wintergreen Way Road. The May 2023 storm caused severe damage and costly damage for me. The town had a civil engineer offer a solution- which I found not adequate after consulting with outside sources. The civil engineers' suggestion was to install a larger pipe under the road and maintain a clear and deeper drainage ditch beyond the collection point down range. This meant the town was to clean the ditch that was filled with dirt and keep it clean and enforce the property owners to maintain a clean culvert. In effect keep the same system just more pipe. My request for reimbursement for damages to loss of property was denied. The city installed a second pipe under the road as of this date, today's date the city has not cleaned the ditch as part of the civil engineers' solution. That has been over a year and many storms since. Additionally, the paving of Beech Mountain Parkway above us was done by private citizens and well over many months and more storms. With the pavement, new homes, and clearing of the ground has increased more water runoff and had a negative impact on me. Helene 2024 caused significant damage in North Carolina and in my case due to the city's failure to respond to cleaning out the ditch, I suffered more damage to my property that was not covered by FEMA or assistance from the city. If you view the street one can see that there is only a small section on Wintergreen Way Road that is always either full of mud or ruts due to the extreme amount of water dependent on the overflow of the rainwater from the rest of the mountain. When the city came to fill the ruts in the road recently, I asked them to cover my water lines where the bank had been washed by the stopped-up ditches they had not cleared in over a year. It would have taken maybe two minutes with the equipment on hand to cover the water line, he refused, I took this as an insult because the freeze was coming that night, and it would burst. His reply was that it was past the meter and on my side. Robbie covered it for me- my neighbor. Helene storm water coming from the Parkway in front of my house reached up to 2-3 feet and into my basement. The only place on Wintergreen Way Road that had water issues because of the collection point on the parkway. When I purchased my house, I spent \$28,000 to stop the basement wall from leaning and approximately \$30,000 more to raise the level in the yard to stop the flow of overrun water from the filled-up ditch overflow.

Since there seems to be a mystery about the subject of gravel for the roads which I have not seen in six years, the collection of rainwater on Beech Mountain Parkway across private property and then forcing it again taking short cuts more in the long run.

Additional comment: As for the pavement of the Parkway for Eagles Nest section that was suggested in the budget. Gravel on that road is better solution, and I'd like to know if you have a list or an assessment of pavement for roads on this mountain- where does that road fit on that list? Robbie did a lot of repairs on those two majors damaged with gravel and rock that have lasted a long time, so I suggest you look into doing that for the Eagles Nest area. If you do pave the roadway- have you done any surveys as to the amount of traffic from Eagles Nest? Another question is what's driving that pavement? I'd like to see if somebody will address the drainage and ditches on this mountain before you start paving roads.

Nick Wilson of 513 Charter Hills Road- I have a recommendation for all of us. I don't know what the town is with FEMA right now on the number of passes that have been completed on roadside debris removal. The five or six roads that I travel around to make sure things are kind of in good shape I made a list of all the limbs and all the trees that are still on the property on Beech Mountain. Some of that property has been where FEMA comes along and picks up some of the debris but leaves a lot as well. I'm recommending that you make a list in your travels around your neighborhood, and we can present these to Bob and Daniel and maybe FEMA will come back and pick up all of the trash. Thank you very much.

Robert McMichael of 710 Pine Ridge Road- I would like to talk about something that is on the agenda, item 8.1 proposal for the comprehensive development plan for the commercial district. In reading the of the attached documentation it comes with a price tag of \$125,000 to \$140,000. We have been spending a whole lot of money cleaning up this town and we got a whole lot of work left to do and we have no idea how much we will be reimbursed. I'd like to say that I think it's prudent that we save our money and spend it on things we actually need right here and now. This may be a good plan that we will hear about today and if it is don't say no but table it and say not now. Thank you.

Carl Martin of 100 Emerald Forest Road- My questions are for the development presentation we're going to be hearing about. What are we looking at in terms of water conservations because every year we come here we see that there are water conservation advisories. Also, the additional need for our fire and police departments, what are we looking at as far as that?

## **6. DEVELOPEMENT PRESENTATION BY JAMES R. PITTS**

## **7. CONSENT AGENDA**

**7.1.** Adoption of Minutes

**7.2.** Adoption of Closed Session Minutes

**7.3.** Audit and Fiinancial Statement Preparation Contract for the year ending June

30th, 2025

## **Motion**

Kelly Melang made a motion approve the Consent Agenda and Alan Villanova seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

## **8. OLD BUSINESS**

### **8.1. Proposal to create a plan for the cohesive development of the Commercial District.**

Town Manager Pudney explained this item is in response to a discussion from a year ago where you were asked to sell a piece of town property along the Parkway for development and in your discussion, you decided you wanted to see an overall plan for not only that parcel but for the entire corridor. If you recall the discussion, you didn't want it to be piecemealing development along the downtown of Beech Mountain. Staff took that and went out and created an RFP, due to Helene this has been pushed back from the original plan of end of October. We moved the RFP to January 31st and received three proposals, through our Economic Development Coordinator- Kate Gavenus. Those proposals were reviewed, and you've got the selection before you today, the Hill Studio Group. The selection of Hill Studio Group came from the depth of their proposal they are bringing two firms the Hill Studio Group and Civic by Design along with some subject matter experts and an economist to perform a marketing analysis as well as transportation analysis and traffic study.

We had asked the TDA to fund a traffic study last year and we were waiting for wintertime for that to occur the storm again set those plans loose and we asked the Hill Studio Group if they would include that in their proposal.

This plan will take a look at the town commercial corridor from the town limits to the entrance of the resort. What makes this a little unique is Kate Gavenus went out and met with the private property owners that are adjacent to the corridor. It is not only public property the town's property but also the adjacent private property along that corridor.

The Hill Studio Group has been recommended to you on this item. For the funding- I have approached the TDA, I met with the chair yesterday and unfortunately for timing they don't have their meeting until after today's meeting. This fits right into the TDA 2/3 pot if you will, the research and putting together a plan to market the town so the intent is to ask the TDA to fund this in its entirety in addition to the monies they have already funded for the traffic study that we are rolling into this. Kate Gavenus also added the Buckeye Creek corridor out the back. There has been talk about developing the area and we have a number of small parcels both town and privately owned.

## **Motion**

M.W. Stanford made a motion to accept pending TDA funding and Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

### 9.1. Budget Amendment, Sanitation Fee Schedule

Town Manager Pudney explained the rules for sanitation today are if you have a compliant trash bin that meets all the rules, we will pick up your garbage twice a week and you pay a fee for that monthly in your utility bill. That's fine until we show up and the bin is non-compliant and what happens today is the crew goes on by and reports it to their supervisor who then goes out and takes a picture and documents the reason and goes back to the office. We wait for someone to complain that we didn't pick up their garbage. Totally inefficient bad situation the garbage is still there and piles up. This proposal allows the Town Manager, and I am going to delegate it to the sanitation supervisor to go ahead and pick up the garbage and document what the non-complaint circumstance is and then send the property a \$25.00 fee on the utility bill for a non-complaint pickup. The caveat in this budget amendment is I have asked you for the permission to be able to adjudicate that for cause.

#### Motion

M.W. Stanford made a motion to approve and Kelly Melang seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

## 10. TOWN MANAGER AND STAFF REPORTS

### 10.1. Town Manager Report and Notes-

1. Weekend traffic –
  - a. Continuing with sign boards regarding overflow parking and parking restrictions.
  - b. Traffic control at the entrance to the resort.
  - c. Continue to see higher traffic on Saturdays
    - i. 7154 vehicles pass the Town Hall
    - ii. 3137 passed the resort entrance. (moved counter).
  - d. Staffing for Presidents' Day weekend and weather
2. Town Hall / Visitor Center
  - a. Certificate of occupancy issued
  - b. Moving visitor center on Thursday and Friday. Expect to be open to the public by the weekend.
  - c. The punch list is lengthy, including repaving the parking lot, this is the reason no striping or wheel stops have been installed.
  - d. The police department has occupied the new space.
3. FEMA projects –
  - a. We have **622** individual damages listed with FEMA, resulting in **37** separate **grants** totaling over 20 million dollars.
  - b. Buckeye reservoir
    - i. Engineering continues, preliminary cost and scope developed for FEMA review. Projected to cost 12 million.

- ii. Water plant and dam structures are moving along, design and permitting.
  - c. **Page 67** - stage 2 water restrictions – seeing some reduction in gross output, I would like to contribute this to conservation as well as improvements to the underground infrastructure. Restrictions to continue.
  - d. Charter Hills Rd. – engineer analysis has determined the roadway is unsafe to open one lane. The road will be closed for a year.
  - e. Debris –
    - i. Met with the contractor, the state increased the cost per cubic yard, and FEMA and the state have approved. \$17.50
    - ii. The town will continue to collect debris until the first pass has been completed. Avery has closed all new debris and Watauga has set March 3rd as the stop date. We will continue due to the weather and poor response from the contractor.
  - f. Roadways
    - i. Gravel – we have listed over 500 culverts and almost every gravel road as damaged including repairs to associated ditches and road shoulder work, FEMA is reviewing the scope of work and estimate of costs. Temporary emergency repairs are being done, and finally, permanent repairs will be completed in the coming months.
  - a. Utility
    - i. Water and sewer lines repair under design, then permitting through the state.
  - b. Contracting – expect various contracts to be brought to you for consideration in the future, we are working to develop the scope of work as well as to comply with FEMA
- Procurement requirements.
- c. Funding
    - i. A \$3 million water loan via DEQ is being discussed as a grant. An additional \$200k was added for administrative expenses.
    - ii. An additional request from FEMA for emergency repairs and debris cleanup is underway. (\$2.9m received so far.)
    - iii. State cash flow program, request due by Friday, we have asked for up to \$22m
    - iv. A \$12m request has been submitted to the state legislature.

- 4. Stormwater utility update-
  - a. Three-year process
  - b. Requires hiring an engineering firm to conduct a study to set requirements and to determine funding levels.
  - c. We can provide a more comprehensive presentation with

preliminary figures this summer.

5. Budget is underway for FY25-26.
6. The TDA budget retreat is on February 19th at Buckeye Recreation Center. December was the highest occupancy tax collected on record. \$209,296.00
7. High Country Council of Governments – 49th annual meeting, March 7th. Rsvp by 2/21. Let Emily know if you would like to attend.

**10.2.** December 2024 Budget and Financial Report to Council

**10.3.** Police Department Monthly Report

**10.4.** Fire Department Monthly Report

**10.5.** Recreation Report January 2025

**10.6.** DOI January Report

**10.7.** Planning & Inspections Monthly Report 2025-01

**10.8.** TDA Report February 2025

## **11. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS**

**11.1.** Councilmember Alan Villanova- Thank you all for being patient during the recovery process. The Town Manager and employees have been working diligently to get us back on our feet, we are in good shape but still have a long way to go. We know that things aren't going as quickly as everyone would like them to but know that the council is in full support of the manager and employees and all that they do. If you see employees working hard, I encourage you to give them a thanks I'm sure they would appreciate that.

Councilmember Art Beckmann- Bob and staff spend a lot of hours going into this recovery effort with a lot more to come. I commend the staff for their diligence. With budget coming up and a lot of balls in the air this council is here to support the citizens and do the best we can to keep moving forward.

Councilmember M.W. Stanford- Hats off to the amount of money that looks like it will flow in. Busy weekend ahead of us, be patient. Visitors are a part of the reason why we're all here. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Kelly Melang- I think we have gone through all four seasons in the last three months so thank you to the staff who have adjusted as needed to be able to accommodate all four seasons on Beech. Busy weekend, plan accordingly.

Mayor Weidner Abernethy- I'm excited to announce next council meeting Dr. Lee King, Lees Mcrae President will be giving us a snapshot of what is happening at Lees Mcrae. I will be attending a meeting next with some of our state representatives we're working hard to get the town 12 million dollars. I am

optimistic to get 12 million but if we get less that is going to be free money the town.

**12. CLOSED SESSION - PURSUANT TO NC GS 143-318.11 (A)(3)  
ATTORNEY CLIENT MATTERS**

12.1. Mayor Abernethy requested a motion to enter into closed session.

**Motion**

Kelly Melang made a motion to enter into a closed session Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

13.1. Mayor Abernethy requested a motion to adjourn at 6:24PM.

**Motion**

Alan Villanova made a motion to adjourn Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

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Town Clerk

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Mayor, Town of Beech Mountain