



# MINUTES

## Regular Town Council Meeting

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

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The Regular Town Council of the Town of Beech Mountain was called to order on Tuesday, March 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 March 11th, 2025, Regular Town Council Meeting to order at 3:59 PM.

### 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

#### Motion

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

### 3. INVOCATION- DEWEY CYCLONE BRETT

### 4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### 5. PUBLIC OUTREACH

5.1. Mayor Abernethy welcomed and thanked Dr. Lee King, President of Lees-McRae College for attending today's meeting.  
Dr. Lee King- Thank you all for having me here today. I want to tell you how

grateful the college is for the Town of Beech Mountain, our relationship, and especially our relationship with the Beech Mountain Resort. We have an academic program in the ski business industry that we could not do without the resort. The big news is today through Saturday our ski and snowboard team are competing in the national championships, defending their three-time national championships. Lees-McRae College is Avery County's largest employer, having nearly three hundred employees our economic impact on the local community is almost 100 million dollars a year. It is my pleasure to tell you Lees-McRae is thriving and doing very well. I am completing my seventh year as president and thankfully we have had a great seven years, the board and I have worked to continue moving forward. We are incorporating and experiencing an incredible amount of growth and momentum. This year we opened with our largest enrollment ever, and the trends for next year look even brighter. On our horizon right now despite the work that we did this summer of opening the 30 million dollar renovations of our historic commons and the acquisition of the former Grandfather Home for Children Campus that has now doubled the physical footprint of Lees-McRae. We are looking out for what our next level of growth is, we are planning for additional residents' hall development, and we also have architects who are working on a new science building as well as a new and expanded May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. We are expanding a partnership with NC State that third-year veterinarian students are coming to Lees-McRae to live and study because we are the only place where they can come and work with wildlife patients. Cash gifts for the college this year are going to be over 10 million, which is double what it has ever been in the past. I attribute that to the momentum we have as well as the growth. I want to thank the members of the council, the local governments, and especially Bob from the public safety perspective we are blessed at the college to be able to continue the business because of this community's comprehensive way they came together to support our rebuilding and the infrastructure in the town and then the community post-hurricane Helene. The college had a significant amount of damage out of 84 total buildings 37 of those had damaged roofs, we had extensive damage to our valley preserve which is off of Puckett Road, and huge tree damage across campus. Thankfully we have a quality insurance policy and many of our losses will be covered fully by insurance and claims will continue to be paid. Our total order of magnitude on our insurance claim is about 10.5 million dollars. We were shut down for 35 days as we sent our students remote as there was no way with the Town of Banner Elk losing their infrastructure that we were able to continue to support students on campus. I am incredibly grateful to the local government's Beech Mountain included for everything you did to help get infrastructure rebuilt and reopened so that we could reopen. During our 35 days closure, we were able to keep our people fully employed, and fully paid and I feel that is another indicator of our growth. We are grateful to be part of this community, and the support we receive, Weidner I'm grateful for your friendship and for inviting me to come and address the council and let you know the good news and things that are happening at Lees-McRae.

Mayor Abernethy announced the Beech Mountain Historical Society placed 5th out of 10 for the best small-town museums in the United States.

Mayor Abernethy discussed this past weekend the Beech Mountain Resort

held a Runs for Buns event (cancer awareness fundraiser). this was initiated after the general manager's wife unfortunately passed away of colon cancer. I would like to thank Talia Freeman for all her efforts in putting this together and the event raised \$110,000.

Mayor Abernethy- I would like to mention in our last meeting on Friday there were some questions on the 3.8 million dollars that the town was awarded. How that came about several months ago I had lunch with the speaker of the house in North Carolina and requested 12 million dollars for hurricane relief funds. Unfortunately, these funds will not be available until after the budget is voted on in July and his assistant called me about a week after our luncheon and explained there is an option that we have for Beech Mountain. The state treasurer's office can loan Beech Mountain 3.8 million; it is a five-year note with zero percent interest and the nice part of this is we turn the receipts into FEMA and then they reimburse us for the 3.8 million and we then pay North Carolina back. I'm honored to be able to share this with you and our council continues to look for funding sources where we can.

## **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

- 6.1.** David Jackson of Boone Area Chamber of Commerce- I want to take a moment to thank you for your leadership over the last few months. you all have been a model to many in having to deal with the difficulties you did but doing so in such a precise way for the benefit of not only your community but everybody else. Know the entire community had you and this community on our hearts on that day and the many days afterward until we got word that things were progressing on Beech Mountain. The purpose of my attending today's meeting is to thank you for the quick adoption of the resolution that is in your consent agenda, calling for continued support for small businesses at the state and federal levels. I think we all understand the pressure that has been put on our small business community. We went to the county commissioner's budget retreat a couple of weeks ago and asked them to make a similar resolution. What this resolution will mean moving forward is we intend to be able to present this to state legislators as well as our federal partners so that our entire community is brought into supporting small businesses and finding ways whether monetary or technical assistance that can be provided to those businesses. Boone Area Chamber has partnered with UNCC Health Appalachian on a series called Messages of Hope; which was created to tell some of the unsung stories of the disaster. Our first episode was on the Valle Crucis School being repurposed into a few different buildings with the help of the community after that schools was lost during the flood. Episode Two is on the Beech Mountain story to help tell the story of how things transpired but the message is this story is about people, Art I believe you were the one who said those words. We are about a week away from releasing it and I appreciate everybody that's been submitting content. We hope that story shows how well you rallied together to get yourselves to the point where you could travel off the mountain and get the help here that was needed. In closing you all are an inspiration to so many throughout our county and it's been a pleasure to be with you here today and certainly appreciate your support for this resolution.

Roseanne Bell of 707 Charter Hills Road- I'm here to talk about how this town has a lot of rather stringent trash pickup regulations but you have no

accommodations for people who are disabled. It is a hardship for me and for others to comply, I have to rely on neighbors to take my trash out to the container on the street. In the winter that is almost impossible because my neighbors all leave. I would like to propose that the town adopt some kind of accommodation for disabled residents. I would be happy to contribute to writing that. Manger Pudney asked Ms. Bell to reach out to him and he would begin setting up that accommodation for her.

## **7. CONSENT AGENDA**

- 7.1. Adoption of Minutes
- 7.2. Adoption of Closed Session Minutes
- 7.3. Adoption of Special Meeting of Town Council Minutes
- 7.4. Revised Resolution 2025-01 Acceptance of NCDEQ Bridge Loan and Grant Funding
- 7.5. Hurricane Relief Support Resolution 2025-05
- 7.6. Mayor Abernethy requested a motion to approve the consent agenda.

### **Motion**

Alan Villanova made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

- 8.1. Stormwater Analysis and Presentation

### **Motion**

M.W. Stanford made a motion to approve the stormwater analysis Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

- 8.2. Contract for Engineering and Design Services

### **Motion**

M.W. Stanford made a motion to approve the Contract for Engineering and Design services with the contingency Attorney Eggers approves the contract Alan Villanova seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

- 8.3. Resolution of Intent to Annex Cherry Gap Property

### **Motion**

M.W. Stanford made a motion to approve the Resolution of Intent to Annex Cherry Gap Property Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

#### 8.4. Capital Budget Ordinance #2025-01

##### **Motion**

M.W. Stanford made a motion to approve the Capital Budget Ordinance 2025-01 Alan Villanova seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

#### 8.5. Call for a Public Hearing on a Proposed Commercial Rezoning (REZ 2025-1329)

##### **Motion**

Alan Villanova made a motion to call for a public hearing to gather public input for Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 4:00 PM Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

### 9. TOWN MANAGER AND STAFF REPORTS

#### 9.1. Town Managers Report-

##### 1. Water Rate Report –

- a. Changed rates in July to:
  - i. Encourage conservation
  - ii. Reduce non-use bills
  - iii. Fund the utility
- b. Reduced monthly base charge to \$45.00 (from \$54.40)
- c. Created a slide per gallon scale to progressively increase the cost per gallon in 1000 gal increments above 3000 gallons

##### **Results:**

- a. Funding level of the utility increased by 12.36% (10% projected)
- b. Withdrew 12,587,000 gallons **less** water from Lake Buckeye. (8 months) (1.5 million gallons per month) See **page 95** in the packet for February data.
- c. We have **not** seen a measurable reduction in gallons consumed.

The reduction in source water consumed may be attributable to a reduction in system leakage. (10 of thousands of dollars in waterline replacement.)

Continue to monitor the water system for at least 12 months before recommending any changes.

2. Health Insurance Benefits – NCLM decided to drop all medical coverages effective 6-30-25 with limited notice. Includes dental and vision. Steve Smith and I are working to solicit proposals to replace coverage. Due to budget timing, we may decide to enter a short-term continuance of coverage until new programs can be properly bid.
3. Lake Buckeye Dredging-
  - a. Bids to be received 3/14.
  - b. The permit is in hand.

- c. Working with FEMA to expedite the approval process.
- d. The debris site for dredged materials is behind schedule.
  - i. State inspection completed
  - ii. Permitting applied
  - iii. Design of roadways and site including erosion control underway.
- e. June 30th target date to complete dredging.

**Manager Pudney requested a special meeting of the town council to award the bid for Tuesday, March 18th at 9:00 am**

In the event we do not receive three bids I will contact the Mayor to cancel the meeting. The bids would be sent back to the contractors unopened and the town would readvertise for bids.

- 4. Water Well – first analysis completed, camera mapping of the well authorized.
- 5. Debris – the state extended the contract until September 28, 2025. The town has extended our contract through July 31, 2025, to account for late arrivals and continued debris.
- 6. Ditch and culvert cleaning is underway to determine the extent of damage as well as to prevent future flooding events due to blocked or damaged culverts. Waiting on FEMA to conduct site inspections scheduled for the end of March. We have over 600 sites to be inspected.
- 7. Roadways – 67 miles of town responsibility. That is the same distance as driving from Town Hall to past Wilkesboro.
 

The town is only making emergency spot repairs on an as-needed basis. Anything the town repairs before a FEMA project approval may not be reimbursable. FEMA is scheduling road inspections in April. The town cannot afford to make major repairs.
- 8. Sewer Plant – and water/sewer lines, contract approved tonight for the engineering and design. Must be approved by the state, DEQ as well as FEMA then permitted and sent out to bid. These repairs will be done for two years.
- 9. We have \$9.7 million dollars secured so far for recovery expenses, with an additional \$2.7 million requested from FEMA under review. **(totaling \$12.4 million dollars available)** estimate \$27 million in total damages. Expect FEMA to cover the total amount.
- 10. The Visitor Center is open for business, the contractor is working on the punch list. The paving will be replaced as soon as the weather permits. I invite everyone to stop in and say hello. There will be a proper ribbon cut and dedication to Ms. Elena Kontinos in June/July; TDA Director Armando has begun organizing this event and we will have more information soon.
- 11. Budget preparation is underway, meeting with department directors this

week.

12. Congratulations to the Beech Mountain Historical Society for being ranked 5th in the country for “Best Small-Town Museum” by USA Today.
13. The new medical rescue fire truck is now in service. It is important to remind everyone that it was funded 100 percent by Dr. Murray Miller’s Mountain Ambulance and Healthcare Foundation and private donations. The total cost was approximately \$300,000 and was funded 100 percent by non-taxpayer money. We thank Dr. Miller and the Mountain Ambulance and Healthcare Foundation.

- 9.2. Mayor Abernethy requested a motion to call for a Special Meeting of the Town Council to approve a bid for dredging of Lake Buckeye on Tuesday, March 18th, 2025 at 9:00 AM.

### **Motion**

Kelly Melang made a motion to call for a Special Meeting of the Town Council on Tuesday, March, 18th at 9:00 AM Art Beckmann seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

- 9.3. January 2025 Budget and Finance Report
- 9.4. Fire Department Monthly Report
- 9.5. February 2025 Recreation Report
- 9.6. DOI Monthly Report
- 9.7. Planning & Inspections Monthly Report 2025-02
- 9.8. Police Department Monthly Report
- 9.9. TDA Report March 2025

## **10. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS**

- 10.1. Councilmember Alan Villanova- I would like to take a moment to recognize Mayor Abernethy. He has done the work of really reaching out and developing relationships with local, state, and federal officials and the town is receiving the benefit of that hard work and dedication the mayor is putting forth. Thank you Weidner for your efforts and we appreciate what you are doing for the town.

Councilmember Art Beckmann- A week or two post-storm Manager Pudney met with local businesses to determine what needed to be done to bring the mountain back to a viable destination for the winter season. I must commend the leadership of Mr. Pudney and the community of businesses during December and January we set records for occupancy tax collections by the TDA.

Councilmember M.W. Stanford- Go Lees-McRae Ski and Snowboard! Thank you town employees for maintaining the roadways during the snow storms. We

are a destination. The Resort, as you can tell by looking at the slopes will make it to the March 22nd scheduled closing date.

Vice Mayor Kelly Melang- Go Lees-McRae! Congratulations to the History Museum on achieving the goal of one of the best small-town museums.

Mayor Weidner Abernethy- I would like to recognize Fred Pfohl. He and I met and he voiced some concerns about the town that he wanted to see changed. It was a positive meeting with constructive criticism on things he wanted to see done better and I think that this council, manager, and town are very transparent. Fred expressed his concerns and it was worth a face-to-face conversation rather than a phone call or email. Fred is passionate about Beech Mountain we're blessed to have him as part of our team. I would just like to thank Fred for all he continues to do for Beech Mountain.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

**11.1.** Mayor Abernethy requested a motion to adjourn at 5:35 PM.

### **Motion**

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

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Town Clerk

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Mayor, Town of Beech Mountain