



MINUTES

Regular Town Council Meeting

4:00 PM - Tuesday, March 14, 2023
Council Chambers

The Regular Town Council of the Town of Beech Mountain was called to order on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, 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

COUNCIL EXCUSED:

STAFF PRESENT: Attorney Stacy Eggers, IV
Town Manager Bob Pudney
Town Clerk Tamara Mercer
Director of Special Projects Riley Hatch

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

Motion

Kelly Melang made a motion to adopt the agenda and Weidner Abernethy seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

3. INVOCATION- DEWEY CYCLONE BRETT

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1. Mayor Kaufman opened the public comment portion of the meeting.

Mr. Kevin Beck of 123 Wild Daisy Lane questioned the road situation on Wild Daisy Lane as it needs repair and a grader. He questioned paving Tamarack and Charter Hills roads. Pond Creek and Hornbeam roads were paved. He said the tax rate went up on his property two and a half times. The

tree limbs are no longer cleared, and the storm drains are clogged with debris. Mr. Beck complained that Public Works has not fixed the roads at Perry Park.

Mr. Noah McMichael of 710 Pine Ridge Road commented on the deer population and chronic wasting disease at the Town Council regular March meeting. He requested a wildlife ordinance to control feeding the deer and not just the bear population. The deer come because of the access to food and corn feed. Mr. McMichael said the town should pass an ordinance that does not allow deer feeding, which would address the surplus deer population.

Mr. Robert McMichael of 710 Pine Ridge Road addressed the annual budget process and said citizens should make comments or send emails to council members. Mr. McMichael wants a conversation with council members to hear citizens' concerns and requested the town start with a baseline budget.

Mr. Fred Harris of 126 Wintergreen Way Road questioned the large tax increase, how long it is in effect, and Mr. Harris asked what the town is doing with the money.

No one else elected to speak.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1.** Adoption of Minutes- Closed Session minutes of December 13, 2022 & February 14, 2023, and Work session minutes of January 25, 2023, and regular meeting minutes of February 14, 2023
- 6.2.** Amendment to the FY 2023 Budget Ordinance

Motion

Weidner Abernethy made a motion to approve the consent agenda items for adopting the minutes and amendment to the budget ordinance and seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- 7.1.** Classification and Salary Study

Mr. Pudney presented the Classification and Salary Study for 2023. He said the last Salary Study was performed in 2015. For the salary study, the Town hired the MAPS Group consulting firm, who specialize in municipality and government human resources services and personnel management. Last year, during April's budget retreat process, the Town Council identified the Salary Study as a top priority, and this meets that goal. Mr. Pudney introduced Vice President of MAPS, Ms. Cheryl Brown. She and Susan Nunn conducted the employee surveys and salary report.

Ms. Brown reviewed her credentials and experience as the Director of Human Resources for the City of Charlotte for 24 years. She noted that all MAPS Group principles and associates have a minimum of 10 years of experience working in human resource management or training positions in

North Carolina State and local government agencies. Most have over 20 years of HR experience. MAPS group has been providing their services since 1983.

She thanked Council for allowing the study which addresses market trends and employment competition. Ms. Brown explained the pay study process conducting employee surveys. The focus is on employee orientation, work and responsibilities, and software and equipment skills. The interviews focus on work performance, and the management team assess recruitment and employee losses, position vacancies, and staff retainment.

The study provided position reclassification and the current pay plan summary report. The report details job descriptions, title positions and it surveys other jurisdictions' minimum and maximum salary pay grade, and the comparisons and pay range with benchmark cities and towns. The study includes the benefits' package comparisons and surveys proximity towns versus Beech Mountain. This included implementation and similar designation with the council manager form of governments with a similar tax structure and membership in the State LGERS system, which have similar contributions in the N.C. State pension retirement system.

She reviewed the town clerk position as an example. The pay rate minimum and maximum salary and similar positions with similar jurisdictions is first in the report. Although the Beech Mountain Town Clerk is also the Human Resources Director, the MAPS Group removed Wilkesboro in comparisons, but included the Wilkesboro information. This was because they are so below the market average. So, the results provide the schedule range for minimum and maximum salary and the assigned and recommended pay grades. develop a job description list of job classes by grade.

She explained the current market trends and changes and added the MAPS Group recommendation of 4% increase would adjust salaries to be competitive. This recommendation retains and helps recruit employees. The NCLM also provides a salary survey every year and is utilized as a tool. Ms. Brown said the recommendation impacts about half the staff as per their schedule to receive the increase. These current salary boosts are recommended and adjusts for new hire and veteran compression and help eliminate those problems. The implementation strategy is found on pages 45 and the details in the charts. The recommendation is based on the employees' pay right now. Looking at option 2 costs approximately \$87,000 and effects about half the workforce. The current COLA recommendation is 5 - 8 % or whatever council decides but then their implementation plan would be adjusted down.

In response to Vice Mayor Accardi's question regarding the benefits package, Ms. Brown said they calculated the full benefits package compared to other towns. The benefits survey was separate from the salary survey in order to compare us with other towns' benefits plans.

Ms. Brown added there will be a comprehensive review of the personnel policy which will include the benefits package recommendations. The most current positions and job descriptions will also be updated.

There was further discussion on the pay grades, clarification and class, job responsibilities and recommendations, benefits and benefits evaluation, and the benefits survey in the report, last year's COLA and this year's recommended COLA as well as the merit pay.

8. TOWN MANAGER AND STAFF REPORTS

8.1. Town Manager's Report-

Mr. Pudney reviewed the manager's report. He said the 'Sales Tax' litigation case was denied by the N.C. Supreme Court. The Town of Boone and Watauga County challenged the sales tax distribution method, wherein Beech Mountain, Seven Devils, and Blowing Rock's receipt of the sales tax distribution may have lost substantial revenues if Boone had prevailed. On March 1, 2023, the N.C. Supreme Court denied Boone's appeal and the case is closed.

Mr. Pudney reviewed the projects and status for:

- Pinnacle Ridge Water Well
- Town Hall/ Visitor Center expansion and renovation
- Lake Coffey/ Lake Santis reservoir
- Skiloft Road area project
- Annual Budget for fiscal year 2023-2024
- Sled Hill

He said the Pinnacle Ridge Water Well received the notice to proceed issued March 1st and we expect the project will be completed in twelve months with a 100,000 gpd capacity.

The Town Hall / Visitor Center expansion and renovation project began with a 4.1% interest rate for the half-million dollars funded at a 10-year term with Truist Bank.

The Staff held several meetings on the Lake Coffey project with Federal and State legislators, both in Raleigh and virtually. Senator Hise, Representatives Pickett, Green, and Hall along with Governor Cooper's Office staff and Representatives Virginia Foxx and Thom Thills' team. Future meetings will be held with Senators' Budd and Lee. Michael Lee is a Beech Mountain resident. Thanks to Mayor Kaufman and councilman Abernethy for taking a trip to Raleigh as we now have direct State funding under consideration by the legislators.

Mr. Pudney reviewed possible funding with the FEMA disaster grant is a 90/10 split at 14-million dollars, the State Grant is 100% allocation funded through DEQ, so it does not have a funding match, and he reviewed the process for a General Obligation Bond. Mr. Pudney said we have support from both federal legislators Representatives Foxx and Tillis and hired bond council Scott Leo for legal guidance on that process. Design and permitting, hired the dam engineer through West Consultants.

Mr. Pudney presented highlights on the infrastructure replacement project in the Skiloft road area including the February 28th neighborhood meeting. Budget is well underway, meeting with departments this week to refine requests. Plan to submit an operational budget with capital expenditures separate.

The Sledding hill will make as much snow as possible this week and we expect to close it following the Ski Resort's schedule for the 18th.

To date since 2017 the infrastructure and Public Works utility projects including the water treatment plant and water and sewer line upgrades that have been completed or are still underway at approximately 28-million-dollars. And we are continuing to invest in infrastructure improvements.

In response to Ms. Mercer's question regarding the General Obligation Bond consensus or vote, Mayor Kaufman called the question to approve the 15-million-dollar General Obligation Bond.

Motion

Barry Kaufman made a motion to approve Staff to move forward with the procedures for securing a General Obligation Bond of 15-million-dollars and Weidner Abernethy seconded the motion. CARRIED. unanimously.

- 8.2. Monthly Finance Director's Report
- 8.3. FY 2023 Budget Adjustment - no action required
- 8.4. Fire Department Monthly Report
- 8.5. February 2023 Recreation Report
- 8.6. DOI Report March
- 8.7. TDA Report March 2023
- 8.8. Planning and Inspections Report 2023-02
- 8.9. Police Department Monthly Report

9. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 9.1. Councilmember Melang referred to the Sanitation report and asked why recycled materials were down, and Mr. Pudney said we receive less from the public. One reason is the move to short-term rentals and those renters do not recycle. The permanent residents in second homes recycle. The switch has an impact to our tonnage, with an increase in solid waste and to the landfill. Melang asked who are the top four taxpayers in the town, Mr. Pudney replied he would have that answer at the April 18th budget retreat, but the businesses would be the Ski Resort and Beech Club as two of the highest paying taxpayers. Ms. Melang congratulated the Ski Resort on raising \$65,000 for colon cancer research. April 18 is the next budget retreat meeting.

Vice Mayor Accardi requested to schedule a town hall meeting to talk about the budget, and lowering the tax rate, to which Councilmember Abernethy agreed. Mr. Pudney stated that the budget calculation begins with departmental baseline costs. Mr. Pudney said he will provide Council with options on lower tax rates and forecast budgets to the April 18th Council retreat and council members can deliberate the tax rate and projected annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year with the options.

Mayor Kaufman said he personally used the ambulance service recently. The EMS unit is professional, and we are extremely lucky to have the medical team on the mountain. The service is money well spent as the ambulance got to his house in 7-to-8 minutes.

10. ADJOURNMENT

- 10.1.** There being no further business, Mayor Kaufman requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

Motion

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

Town Clerk

Mayor, Town of Beech Mountain