

BANNER ELK TOWN COUNCIL
January 13, 2020
MINUTES

The Banner Elk Town Council met Monday, January 13, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at the Banner Elk Town Hall for their regular scheduled meeting.

Council Members present: Mayor Brenda Lyerly, David Lecka, Charlie VonCanon, Robert Tufts and Mike Dunn. Allen Bolick was absent.

Staff present: Town Manager Rick Owen, Cheryl Buchanan, Police Lieutenant Orrie Smith, Justin Hodges and Attorney Four Eggers.

Call Meeting to Order

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Lyerly called the regular monthly meeting of January 2020 to order.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Lyerly led those in attendance with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Council Member VonCanon opened the meeting with prayer.

Approval of the Regular Meeting Minutes

Mayor Lyerly asked for a motion to approve or amend the December 9, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes. Council Member VonCanon motioned to approve the minutes as written. Council Member Dunn seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Approval of Stated Agenda

Mayor Lyerly asked for a motion to approve or amend the stated agenda. Council Member Lecka motioned to approve the stated agenda. Council Member Tufts seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Woolly Worm Committee – Special Presentation

Melinda Pepple, with the Avery County Chamber of Commerce, thanked Council for welcoming this presentation on the Woolly Worm Festival and for allowing the festival to take place in Banner Elk. She noted that that this will be the 43rd year for the festival and noted how successful it has become. Ms. Pepple introduced Mary Jo Brubaker, chairman of the Woolly Worm Festival. Ms. Brubaker gave an overview of the past year's festival and noted that based on ticket sales, volunteers and vendors, approximately 15,000 people attended the festival. She reviewed the number of vendors and booth spaces and volunteers that help out at the festival, averaging between 70 to 100+ volunteers. She noted that they were able to thank the volunteers with a gift pass from

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. Ms. Brubaker reported that several meetings were held with Town Manager Mr. Owen, Police Chief Kevin Hodges, Fire Chief Tyler Burr and Fire Marshall Paul Buchanan regarding emergency security and public safety and explained their new plan. She explained several other talking points (i.e. booth space for non-profits, Woolly Worm stage and ticket booth, new fall banners for the Town, the impact the festival has on the community with the money that is raised, etc.). Ms. Pepple reported that the festival committee conducted a roundtable discussion with several members of the community and noted that there will be future meetings this year to continue to have open discussions regarding the success of this festival and ways of improving so that everyone benefits. She discussed the future plans for sponsorship opportunities. Council Member VonCanon thanked Ms. Pepple and Ms. Brubaker for the in-depth report on everything that their committee is doing. Mayor Lyerly also thanked them for all their work with making the Woolly Worm Festival a success. Mr. Owen stated that he believes this interaction with Council, the Festival Committee and Town representatives is productive for the community and for the Woolly Worm Festival as it continues to grow and change each year.

Consider Request – Boy Scouting Event: Camping in Park

Mayor Lyerly introduced Dr. Lee King, President of Lees-McRae College. Dr. King thanked Council for the great relationship the college and the Town is enjoying together. He noted that he and Mr. Owen have developed a good working relationship and that from the college's perspective he appreciates the work that Council, the Town and the college has done in joint projects. Dr. King reported that the college will be hosting on April 4th a Boy Scout Merit Badge College. He noted that many institutions will host a weekend where regional scouting troops are invited to their campuses where they will be given the opportunity to earn up to two merit badges on their rank progressions towards obtaining eagle scout. Dr. King stated that right now we are signed up to offer 21 different merit badges (i.e. rock climbing, fly fishing, etc.), He is hoping that this event will attract scouts from North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia and noted that when scouts attend these merit badge college events they enjoy a camping experience overnight. Dr. King reported that the merit badge college will begin at 8:30 Saturday morning and will go through till 5:00 that afternoon. Some scouts will come Friday night and camp and others will want to stay Saturday night as well. He stated that Tate-Evans Park is a prime location for this camping event and is asking Council's permission to allow us to make available the park as a place they can camp those evenings. Dr. King noted that the park has easy bathroom access and a covered shelter which will help facilitate the event. He stated that he anticipates this will be an annual event for the college. Council Member Tufts motioned to approve the request to scouts camping in the park and Dr. King working with the Town to develop a layout for the event and help with the organization. Council Member Lecka seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Historic Banner Elk School – Draft Site Plan Review

Mr. Derek Goddard, with Blue Ridge Environmental Consultants, distributed a draft copy of the site plan for the Historic Banner Elk School to Council Members. He requested that Council Members review the plan on their own and spend time looking over the details. Mr. Goddard went over a few of the highlights of the plan. He noted that the plan is essentially 90% complete. He reviewed some of the minor details, placement details (i.e. placement of electric service). He asked if Council was pleased with the raised crosswalks and painted crosswalks. Mr. Goddard noted that storm water has been dealt with appropriately by pulling all the storm water into the existing catch

basin system and stated that he alternated a few parking spaces. Mr. Goddard reported that he and Mr. Owen would like Council's feedback and suggested a work session where informally we all will gather and discuss the site plan, sharing opinions, suggestions, etc. He reported that the main ticket item that remains is that once the plan is finalized, we will need to finalize the phasing and the construction schedule around the events scheduled at the school grounds. Questions were raised concerning parking. Mr. Goddard noted that the plan shows a total of 117 parking spaces. Mr. Owen addressed the price quote from Mountain Electric (underground power lines) and stated that the Town will bear these costs which are approximately \$72,000, which does not include all the pedestals for new power getting to those points. Mr. Owen stated the water system improvements to the property which will cost approximately \$100,000. He also reported that he has spoken with Piedmont Natural Gas. They do not co-share any ditches with any other utility company and rarely permit anyone to dig a ditch for them, so they weren't very helpful in giving the Town an estimate. He noted that until we have more concrete plans for the project, we will hold off on Piedmont Natural Gas. There was further discussion about underground electrical lines, additional parking spaces at the dumpster, raised vs. unraised crosswalks, the former Baltzley's Jewelers' property, etc. Mr. Silver suggested the consideration of electric vehicle charging stations in the plan and additional handicapped parking spaces at the rear of the school. Mr. Goddard stated that there will be two electrical vehicle charging stations and we can certainly provide electricity for a bike-share station and noted that he will re-evaluate the area in back of the school. Mr. Owen suggested that Council take these plans, review them and plan on scheduling another meeting to further discuss the plan in the near future.

Resolution for Treasury Services – First Community Bank

Mr. Owen reported that Highlands Union Bank has been purchased by First Community Bank. He noted that the Town will not have to make any changes to our operations with the bank operating under a new name. However, one item that Council needs to address is a Resolution for Treasury Services. The copy that the bank dropped off required the signature of the Town Manager. Mr. Owen clarified that what was asked to be signed was a certification that Council passed the resolution. He noted that following a discussion with Attorney Eggers, a revised resolution was written and set up for the Mayor's signature. He distributed the revised resolution and highlighted several items pertaining to internet banking and ACH (Automated Clearing House) transactions. Mr. Owen stated that currently the Town requires two signatures for all checks written (i.e. Town Manager and a Council Member). However, with online banking and ACH, signatures aren't required. He noted that he is the designated administrator and is able to do account transfers, payroll, and different types of payments made related to payroll. Mr. Owen noted that Myra Guignard, the Town's Utility Billing Specialist, is also listed on the resolution for utility drafts, but does not have access to the Town's banking accounts. Mr. Owen reported that he read the master agreement and didn't agree with some its terms and would like Attorney Eggers to review it fully. Council Member Dunn motioned to approve the Certificate of Resolution contingent upon Attorney Eggers' review of the document and negotiating the terms to the master agreement. Council Member VonCanon seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Consider Contract for 2019-2020 Audit Services

Mr. Owen distributed to Council the 2018-2019 Audit and noted that once Council's has had an opportunity to review, Misty Watson stated that she will meet with Council to answer any questions. He stated that he also asked Misty Watson to provide to the Town a contract for audit services for the 2019-2020 fiscal year for Council's consideration. Mr. Owen noted that Ms. Watson has not changed her fee from prior years but changed the way the fee was allocated. He reported that she does financial statement work for the Town and used to charge \$2,500, but this year it will be \$1,500 and moved the other \$1,000 back to audit fees. It is the same total amount. Council Member Lecka motioned to approve the contract for audit services. Council Member Dunn seconded. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Budget Amendment

Mr. Owen reported that this budget amendment relates to the site planning project that Derek Godard with Blue Ridge Environmental is working on which Council approved in May 2019, which was last fiscal year. He noted that he did not have these funds budgeted for this current fiscal year. Mr. Owen stated that these funds will be coming from the money the Town has left from the naming rights for the Hahn Auditorium. This budget amendment will move funds from the Fund Balance reserve to Professional Services, paying for the site plan work. Council Member VonCanon motioned to approve the budget amendment. Council Member Tufts seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Manager's Update

Mr. Owen distributed the Financial Summary Report for 6 months ending 12/31/19 and noted that included in Council Member's packets are the police report, planning, zoning and tax collection reports. He stated that if there were any questions regarding these reports to let him or staff know. Mr. Owen noted that also included in their packets is a draft copy of the Planning Board Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2020 and a copy of the High Country ABC Meeting Minutes of November 21, 2019. Mr. Owen stated that one item that is not included on this month's agenda is the Historical Banner Elk School Project Updates. It's been a part of Council's agenda for the past 4-5 years and it could be added back if Council feels the need. Otherwise, he will report on any school issues in his Manager's Update.

Mr. Owen reported that the project to replace the doors on the Historic Banner Elk School has been completed. He noted that the Banner Elk Educational, Arts and Cultural Complex raised the funds to replace the doors. He noted that they are very nice and much easier to open.

Mr. Owen state that included in Council's agenda package is a donation letter to the Historic Banner Elk School from SkyLine SkyBest (Operation Pocket Change). He noted that SkyLine SkyBest has been making this donation to the school project since the Town purchased it.

Mr. Owen updated Council on the WiFi project. He noted that all the electrical work is complete. There are several antenna locations that we had to get outlets to (3 on the sidewalks, 3 in the park, 1 on the shelter, etc.). The Town is now working with SkyLine in getting connections in place to these locations.

Mr. Owen reported that the Town is getting more requests for special events to be held in the Park (i.e. weddings). There are two requests thus far for this summer; one for a rehearsal dinner in May and the other for a wedding in August. In previous discussions with Council, issues such as fees, number of people, alcohol use, etc. were talked about. He noted that they spoke with Valle Crucis, with a similar public park atmosphere. They schedule events as mentioned and we received from them pricing information on what they charge and how they operate their events. Mr. Owen stated that it is doable, but does the Town want these types of events in the park. There were discussions regarding these types of events held in the park and it being a public park, the time and effort involved for Town staff, limiting the number of events held in the summer, the number of people invited to these events, parking, etc. It was agreed that Mr. Owen proceed with working up a list of guidelines for holding such events in the park to cover the cost for the Town.

Mr. Owen stated that he would like to schedule a Planning Workshop for the end of March, first part of April. He noted that last year, the workshop was held on Saturday morning, March 23rd. It was agreed that a date will be decided upon at next month's meeting.

Council Member VonCanon commended the hard work extended by the Town's maintenance staff and Police for attending to a water line break.

At 7:31 p.m. Council Member Tufts motion for Council to proceed to closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11. Council Member Lecka seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Council returned to open session at 8:21 p.m.

There being no further business, Mayor Lyerly asked for a motion to adjourn January's meeting.

At 8:21 p.m. Council Member Tufts motioned to adjourn the January 2020 Town Council meeting. Council Member VonCanon seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Adjourn

The Banner Elk Town Council meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Mayor Brenda Lyerly

Attested

Approved: February 10, 2020