

BANNER ELK TOWN COUNCIL
October 14, 2019
MINUTES

The Banner Elk Town Council met Monday, October 14, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Banner Elk Town Hall for their regular scheduled meeting.

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

Staff present: Town Manager Rick Owen, Nancy Owen, Justin Hodges and Attorney Four Eggers.

Call Meeting to Order

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Lyerly called the regular monthly meeting of October 2019 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 September 9, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes. Council Member Tufts motioned to approve the minutes as written. Council Member Bolick 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 Tufts motioned to approve the stated agenda. Council Member Dunn seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Board of Elections Contract

Mr. Owen stated that included in Council's packet is a contract from the Avery County Board of Elections to hold the Town's municipal election this November. He noted that in the agreement, the Board anticipates no more than a 10% increase from the last election. Mr. Owen stated that in 2017 the Town paid the County \$1,516.68. Attorney Eggers reported that it is statutory required that the County holds the election for the Town and that the Town pay for their services. It is a North Carolina law. Mayor Lyerly asked for a motion. Council Member VonCanon motioned to approve the Board of Elections Agreement. Council Member Bolick seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Consider Call for Public Hearing: Height Restrictions in MU Zoning District

Mr. Owen asked if Council had any questions or needed further interpretation on what is being proposed. He noted that the request for a public hearing has to do with building height restrictions in the MU zoning district and currently the only affected property is the old hospital. Mayor Lyerly asked if there was a motion to call for a public hearing at the November 11th Council meeting. Council Member Bolick motioned to call for a public hearing. Council Member Dunn seconded the motion. Council Member Tufts asked what the current height restriction is. Mr. Owen stated that everything in Town is currently 35 feet. Council Member Tufts asked what the current height of the hospital building was. Mr. Owen noted that we don't know the exact height, but estimating less than 70 feet; perhaps between 60 and 65 feet. Mr. Owen reported that the Planning Board, along with Attorney Eggers, met and discussed this topic in detail. Mayor Lyerly asked if there were further questions. There being no further discussion, all Council Members were in favor. No one opposed.

Downtown Wi-Fi Project

Mr. Owen reported that in July 2018 the Town applied for an Appalachian Regional Commission Grant to do a 50/50 match on the downtown wireless internet project. At the time it was proposed that the Town and the TDA would split the match for the installation and the ongoing cost of operation. Mr. Owen stated that the grant the Town applied for was based on the first quote received for the project which was \$65,000. Appalachian Regional Commission granted the Town \$32,827.00. It was the intent that the Town and the TDA would split the other half at \$16,000.00 each. He noted that Council budgeted \$16,000 this year to go toward this project. Mr. Owen stated that once the Town received the grant, it obtained additional bids for the project. The Town received a bid that was substantially lower than the initial bid received; roughly half of the initial cost that the Town received the grant for. Mr. Owen stated that in their proposal they give costs for ongoing maintenance and support of the system. The Town initially received a quote of \$10,000 annually to upkeep the system, but that did not include all the analytics that we really wanted along with marketing components of the system. Mr. Owen reported that staff is recommending Aerolina out of Charleston, South Carolina for this project. He noted that we can do the installation and the first year of service and support at approximately \$42,000, which is \$23,000 less than the initial quote. Mr. Owen stated that Aerolina's goal is to keep the Town a customer; servicing the system, keep it running and performing all the analytics. Council Member Tufts asked if the company can run analytics for each antenna. Mr. Owen stated that the company can provide a different connection page for the area by the Chamber of Commerce, a different connection page for the area by the school, a different connection page for a certain time of the year, etc. Council Member Lecka asked if there were any other municipalities in the area using this type of system. Mr. Owen noted that the closest is Lenoir and that Google has also done a project in Lenoir that includes 12 city blocks. Council Member Dunn asked if they have to change from antenna to antenna and how does the Town get the word out about this wireless internet. Mr. Owen stated that Aerolina described that it is one system and it would be seamless. He also noted that signage was discussed as a way to let people know and word of mouth. There was discussion about capacity issues, an internet provider (Spectrum, Skyline), the directional antennas used, the recommended three-year contract with Aerolina, extend antennas to Lees-McRae, etc. Council Member Tufts motioned to proceed with Aerolina for the installation and support of the wireless

internet system. Council Member Bolick seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Review Draft Site Plan, Historic Banner Elk School

Derek Goddard with Blue Ridge Environmental Consultants addressed Council regarding the design plans for the Historic Banner Elk School site plan. He reported that he anticipates going to bid for this project in January 2020 and proceed with construction when the weather breaks. He noted that what is important is phasing this project to deal with Town events (i.e. art shows, festivals, Woolly Worm). Mr. Goddard reported that there are 3 major parts of the plan: (1) The first issue is the drainage in the field. (2) The second is extending the street to Town Hall, dealing with the streets that exist now in the area and making it pedestrian friendly. (3) The third issue is parking and how to provide the most parking for the area and meet Town ordinances. Mr. Goddard went over the parking layout which uses a lot of diagonal parking and some parallel parking. He noted that they were able to get 120 total parking spaces with this plan. In reviewing the parking plan, Mr. Goddard noted that all streets are two-way and a majority of them are 24 ft. wide. Mr. Goddard reviewed the pedestrian layout of the plan (brick paved sidewalks, raised crosswalks, landscaping, streetlamps, etc.). There was discussion about saving the oak trees, dumpster located at the school, the possibility of angled parking behind the school, the adjacent property on Culver Road and the new owner, etc. Mr. Goddard went over the major drainage issue in the field and the proposed plan to remedy it. He noted that the plan called for curb and gutter and that all the water will drain into the existing storm water retention system. The field itself will be raised 2-3 feet. Mr. Owen stated that in reality, due to the scope and size of this project along with the Town's financial commitment, this project may take some time and will have to be done in phases. It will not be a 12-month project and we won't know how involved it will be until the bids come in. Mr. Owen explained the field, the drainage system and how the area will look totally different once completed. There was further discussion regarding the grading in front of the school. Mr. Goddard reviewed the plans for underground utilities, street lighting and landscaping and also noted that there will be two accesses to the field. Mr. Owen stated that although not on the plan it was suggested that a water line connection be installed between Shawneehaw and Culver Street along with a hydrant on the property. He will ask David Poore for his input. There was discussion about a walkway from the elk to the school, providing bicycle racks on the grounds, and the use of the field for Art on the Greene while construction is going on, etc. Mr. Goddard stated that he would prefer beginning the project in the field area and feels that the part of the project that will take the most time will be the new street. Mr. Goddard noted that he will draw up a written plan on how this project will be phased along with a timeline, coordinating with the dates for events held on the school property. He will come back to Council for another presentation on the completed site plan. Mayor Lyerly thanked Mr. Goddard for the presentation. No action was taken on the part of Council Members. Mr. Owen stated that he wants to keep this process moving forward and would like Council's feedback

Historic Banner Elk School Project Updates

Mr. Owen reported that the Porsche Club had its rally in front of the school last month and it attracted a lot of people into Town.

Mr. Owen stated that the Mt. Calvary Kids Fest, which was held in conjunction with Lees-McRae Family Weekend, went well and everyone was pleased.

Mr. Owen reminded Council of the Halloween event which Nancy is heading up. It will be held on October 31st at the Historic Banner Elk School from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Owen reported that Dick Lawson, with Feeding Avery Families, has an opportunity to collect food for needy families in Avery County, RAM and a couple of other organizations in Avery County. He would like to put a trailer (approximately 8 x 6 ft.) at the Historic Banner Elk School with a banner stating what the donations are for. Mr. Owen noted that it will be for a week in December. Council Members agreed that it was for a good cause and gave him permission.

There was discussion about the tree lighting on Corner on Main.

Council Member Bolick reported that the golf tournament was a very successful. It was held at Beech Mountain Club and everyone had a great time. Weather was good and the food delicious. He noted that they raised \$42,000 that will go towards the Historic Banner Elk School.

Council Member Tufts questioned the school being closed Thursday and Friday for this weekend, the Woolly Worm Festival. Council Member Bolick noted it was due to parking for the volunteers and the tenants. There was discussion about it being opened on Thursday.

Consider Budget Amendments

Mr. Owen reported that Budget Amendment #20191014-1 is for the accounting of public donations received by the police department for a traffic trailer for their equipment (i.e. cones, barricades, etc). It is for recognizing the \$2,500 donation and the added expenditure for the traffic trailer. Council Member VonCanon motioned to approve the budget amendment. Council Member Dunn seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Mr. Owen reported that Budget Amendment #20191014-2 is to recognize the donation for a dedicated park bench and the expense for the park bench. He stated that with this donation, the Town can replace old wooden benches with new benches made with recyclable plastic which are more comfortable and durable. Council Member VonCanon motioned to approve the budget amendment. Council Member Bolick seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Manager's Update

Mr. Owen reported that included in Council Member's packets are the Financial Summary Report for 3 months ending 9/30/19, police report, planning, zoning and tax collection reports. He stated that if there were any questions regarding these reports to let him or the staff know. Mr. Owen noted that also included in their packets is a draft copy of the Planning Board Meeting Minutes of October 7, 2019 and the High Country ABC Meeting Minutes of August 15, 2019.

Mr. Owen reminded Council that the High Country Municipal Association meeting will be held this Thursday, October 17th at Sugar Mountain.

Mr. Owen reported that the Family Picnic in the Park with Lees-McRae and TDA was a great success and everyone enjoyed the evening.

Council Member VonCanon noted that the bear-proof garbage cans seem to be working, but perhaps need a label explaining what they are and a need to change the placement of one of them in the park.

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

At 8:02 p.m. Council Member Tufts motioned to adjourn the October 2019 Town Council meeting. Council Member Lecka seconded the motion. All were in favor. No one opposed.

Adjourn

The Banner Elk Town Council meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Mayor Brenda Lyerly

Attested

Approved: November 11, 2019