

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN BOARD OF ALDERMEN**  
**BUDGET WORKSHOP**  
**June 21, 2011**

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**THE BLACK MOUNTAIN BOARD OF ALDERMEN** met in a budget workshop on Tuesday, June 21, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. in the Board Room at Town Hall, 160 Midland Avenue, Black Mountain, NC.

Mayor Carl Bartlett called the meeting to order at 8:30 am with the following members present:

Mayor Carl R. Bartlett  
Mayor pro tem Joan Brown  
Alderman Ruth Brandon  
Alderman Tim Rayburn  
Alderman Carlos Showers  
Alderman Mike Sobol

The following staff members were present:

Marcia D. Onieal, Town Manager  
Darlene Whisenant, Town Clerk  
Steve Jones, Fire Chief  
Kevin Pressley, Police Chief  
Steve Padgett, Police Lieutenant  
Dean Luebbe, Finance Director  
Casey Conner, Recreation Services Director  
Mark Combs, Public Services Director  
John Shaw, Golf Maintenance Superintendent  
Brent Miller, Golf Operations Administrator  
Deon Lytle, MPA Summer Intern  
Jennifer Tipton, Permits Clerk/Building Inspector, Level 1  
Genella Gray, Human Resources Coordinator

Other Attendees:

Mark Vanderhoff, Black Mountain News  
Elaine Loutzenheiser, Black Mountain Citizen  
Marilyn Sobanski, Black Mountain Citizen  
Stephanie Wilds, Business Owner  
Richard Hudson, Business Owner  
Tom Gill, Town Square Steering Committee Chair

The meeting began with discussion of Item 2 rather than Item 1 on the agenda due to Alderman Sobol, who requested the Grey Eagle Arena information, not being present at this time.

## **Item 2: Listing of Town Property for Sale- Discussion to Provide Direction**

Town Manager Marcy Onieal introduced Tom Gill, Chair of the Town Square Steering Committee. Mr. Gill reviewed the timeline handout stating the three objectives of the ad hoc Board appointed committee. 1. Develop a process for encouraging, receiving and responding to public input; to include the areas of purpose/use of space, design of space, fundraising for property development and general information/communication. 2. Recommend interim use of property. 3. Identify resources needed for process and implementation.

Mr. Gill emphasized that since May 2010, the Steering Committee has been actively working under board approval to accomplish each of the mandated tasks. Numerous reports have been provided to the Board regarding each completed task and progress on others.

To gather public input, the Steering Committee, with Board approval, secured the services of the Public Policy Institute of Western North Carolina University, as represented by Drs. Christopher A. Cooper and H.Gibbs Knotts. The survey commissioned was held during October 2010 and returned statistically valid results that included the following:

Question: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of using the town square property as a public space for parks, recreation and public gatherings? 59% Favorable; 27% Unfavorable.

Question: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of using the town square property for retail stores? 31% Favorable; 55% Unfavorable.

Question: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of using the town square property for parking? 35% Favorable; 50% Unfavorable.

Question: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of selling the town square property? 28% Favorable; 53% Unfavorable.

Based upon these survey results, the Steering Committee recommended, and the Board approved pursuing grants and other funding to facilitate traffic and street alignment issues, and general design of the space. This funding was secured using an MPO grant along with a \$6,000 contribution from the Town. The Design Workshops dates are scheduled for June 22-24, 2011.

At the June 13, 2011 Board of Aldermen meeting the Board voted 4-1 to sell the Town Square Property. The decision was made to check about deed restrictions on the property, as well as wait for results from the traffic study conducted by Martin, Alexiou and Bryson before pursuing the sale.

***Mayor pro tem Brown made a motion to hold a closed session at the June 28th budget meeting so that Town Attorney Ron Sneed could be present for legal counsel regarding the next steps. The motion passed 5-0.*** Ms. Onieal agreed to communicate with Mr. Sneed and the Planning Board members.

Mayor Carl Bartlett had to dismiss himself from the meeting for personal reasons. Ms. Brown presided over the remainder of the meeting.

### **Item 1: Grey Eagle Budget Discussion**

Ms. Onieal opened discussion regarding the Grey Eagle budget questions after handing out documentation which included a Grey Eagle project timeline; excerpts from Recreation Commission and Board of Aldermen minutes dated December 9, 2004 through January 24, 2008 pertaining Clevenger/Grey Eagle property; general ledger sheets showing initial Grey Eagle expenses from November 17, 2005 through June 28, 2006; and a Black Mountain Recreation & Parks Grey Eagle Arena Marketing Plan dated Fall/Winter 2011.

Alderman Sobol confirmed he served as Project Manager and logged over 650 volunteer hours on the Grey Eagle project. On this particular project the Town was its own general contractor. Ms. Onieal stated that if a project is over \$30K or more, according to NCGS they must hire a licensed general contractor and must bid it out. Dan Cordell, Town Building Inspector, emphasized that according to the state licensing board the town had to carry its own liability and he did check that out with former Town Manager, Tony Caudle.

Alderman Showers thanked the town staff for expending so much time and effort to gather the requested information regarding the Grey Eagle project. There was still some debate about the promise of a pay back of \$8,480 for the asbestos removal.

Alderman Brown asked Casey Conner how many days is the Grey Eagle Arena open. His response was not every day except during the November through February months. Renters pay for parties at \$35 per hour for residents and \$50 per hour for non-residents, schools and non-profit organizations.

Alderman Sobol asked Mr. Conner to research and to provide cost of maintenance repairs FY08-09, as well as departmental expenses and program costs for that time period. Alderman Sobol made a recommendation that volunteers be trained to open and close the facility rather than paying town employees for those extra hours.

### **Item 3: Golf Course Management Options**

Ms. Onieal provided informative handouts addressing the Golf Course Management Options. She challenged the Board to review and agree or disagree with the following list of needs to save the Black Mountain Golf Course:

- Best open play golf experience in WNC
- Higher course standards/Better maintenance practices
- Great greens
- Reasonably price, affordable for our citizens
- As Enterprise Fund, must pay its own way, including setting aside for capital reserve

- Successful Food & Beverage Service
- Must withstand recession and successfully compete for market share
- Fully utilize course capacity- grow number of rounds
- Higher Revenues/More revenue generating opportunities
- Lower labor expenses
- Targeted Marketing
- Cash Controls
- Data collection and report
- Improved Customer Service
- IT support
- Financial Accounting/Reporting support
- HR support
- Food & Beverage Expertise (or a successful lessee)
- Development of Game among youth
- Tap the tourist trade

Alderman Brown agreed that the Golf Course should be an enterprise fund that must pay its own way, including setting aside for capital reserve. She also commented that it isn't the only sport that the town offers. Alderman Brown was impressed with the Billy Casper Golf Management group who made their presentation at the June 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. She was concerned that the current staff would lose their jobs, however Ms. Onieal stated that all that could be negotiated within a contract. Alderman Brandon agreed with Alderman Brown's comment that the taxpayers should not have to subsidize the golf course operations.

Ms. Onieal made the recommendation not to hire a general manager but to engage a professional golf management service. Alderman Rayburn asked how much would it cost and how would the town pay for it. Ms. Onieal stated that it would be approximately \$78K annually, which would be less than hiring a general manager with benefits. She also said that reducing labor cost for the golf course is imperative and recommended hiring seasonal management staff rather than full-time employees. Alderman Showers asked how soon a management company could come in. Ms. Onieal commented that it could be in place as soon as 2-3 weeks.

Alderman Showers asked when the clubhouse would be completed. Ms. Onieal said that the town was waiting for the RFP bid to come back in. An award could possibly be made as soon as the middle of July. Alderman Sobol asked if the ADA compliance items were being handled in the clubhouse and Ms. Onieal reassured him that they were. The pro shop non-compliant issues are being addressed as well.

Ms. Onieal then asked for the board to review the three different options and possibly vote on one.

- Option 1- Hire General Manager (Already BoA approved)
- Option 2-Leave General Manager position vacant and use existing staff
- Option 3-Engage Professional Golf Management

Alderman Sobol commented that John Shaw and Brent Miller have both done an excellent job and provided a good business plan. His recommendation was to support our own staff at this time. Alderman Rayburn asked that the town allow a trial basis with current staff through the summer.

Alderman Brown expressed concern that the staff would continue to receive negative feedback and with the help of a professional golf management company the golf course could once again become self sufficient. *Alderman Brown made a motion to elect Option 3, Alderman Showers second the vote. The vote passed 3-2 with Alderman Sobol and Rayburn opposing.*

Alderman Sobol then excused himself at 10:00am, stating he had another appointment.

**Item 4: Revisions to Proposed Budget**  
**State Health Plan – Genella Gray**  
**Corrections – Dean Luebbe**

Alderman Showers expressed concern that without a full Board of Aldermen in attendance, it would not be wise to continue to proceed to adopt the budget. Alderman Showers made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:08.



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Carl R. Bartlett, Mayor



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Marcia D. Onieal, Town Manager

ATTEST:



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Darlene R. Whisenant, Town Clerk