

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN SQUARE STEERING COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
Thursday, May 6, 2010
4:00-5:00pm**

THE TOWN SQUARE STEERING COMMITTEE held its organizational meeting on Thursday, May 6, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. in the Board Room of Town Hall, 160 Midland Avenue, Black Mountain, NC.

Town Manager Marcy Onieal called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., noting that her role as initial convener/facilitator is intended to be a temporary one, with the committee itself determining its own leadership and operating procedures. She noted that some of the agencies which were invited to appoint a representative to this committee had not yet responded, but were expected to send a representative to the next meeting, except as noted below. The following members were present:

Town Appointees

Board of Aldermen Appointee – *Rosalie Phillips*
Mayoral Appointee – *Richard Hudson*
Town Manager – *Marcy Onieal*

Town Boards & Commissions

ABC Commission – *(declined to participate)*
Greenways Commission – *Julie White*
Historic Preservation Commission – *Bill Munn*
Housing Commission – *Joanne Brannon*
Planning Board – *Ryan Stone*
Recreation Commission -
Urban Forestry Commission – *Van Burnette*

Community Business/Cultural/Service Agencies

Beautification Committee – *Tom Woerz*
Black Mountain Center for the Arts – *Jane Reeves*
Black Mountain-Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce - *Don Farrow*
Business to Business – *Tom Gill*
Certified Entrepreneurial Community Task Force - *Mary Leonard White*
Health Initiative –
Martin Luther King Jr. Corporation –
Public Library Board –
Swannanoa Christian Ministries – *(declined to participate)*
Swannanoa Valley History Museum – *Jill Jones*

Adjacent Businesses

Acoustic Corner –
Pinnacle Properties –
Public Safety Center (Fire/Police) –
Town Hardware – *(declined to participate)*
Tyson's Furniture – *(declined to participate)*
White Horse Black Mountain –

Others in Attendance

Darlene Whisenant, Town Clerk
Joan Brown, Mayor pro tem
Carlos Showers, Alderman
Mark Vanderhoff, Black Mountain News

Willie Headley
Nan Higgins
Gay Fox

The Town Manager explained that although the Town’s Board of Aldermen initiated the formation of this ad hoc committee, and approved, by consensus, the general representational makeup of its membership, it intended this committee to be a completely independent and objective body, representing the full range of community interests with regard to the Town Square property. The Board of Aldermen has requested that the committee respond to the following charge and to make an initial progress report to the Board by June 14, 2010.

*The Town Square Steering Committee is charged with **recommending a process for encouraging, receiving, analyzing and responding to public input** with regard to disposition, development and interim use of the 1.4 acre town-owned parcel in the block bounded by State Street, Montreat Road, and Honeycutt Street.*

Specifically the steering committee has been asked to:

- 1) Consider all possible uses of the town square property, ultimately recommending the best permanent use, based on community consensus and available resources
- 2) Develop a conceptual design for future public or public/private development(s) based on the recommendation from #1 above
- 3) Research options for funding/financing future public or public/private development(s)
- 4) Identify additional resources needed to complete planning process and to prepare for future property development
- 5) Recommend how best to engage and communicate with the public regarding the Town Square property and this committee’s work
- 6) Recommend an interim use policy for the property, subject to Town approval

As the committee members introduced themselves, the manager asked each participant to identify important goals with regard to the work of the Steering Committee and his/her personal vision for what the Town Square property ultimately should be and look like. Responses were recorded on newsprint as follows, check-marks indicating identical or similar responses being mentioned by multiple participants:

Goals for Steering Committee:

- Ideas expressed by members should be specific & cohesive
- Public input must be inclusive; carefully designed; open w/ lots of opportunities and multiple avenues to truly hear the public voice ✓
- Committee must strive to achieve clear community consensus ✓

- Planning & implementation process should be designed to result in a positive community-building experience (win-win, instead of win-lose)
- The development plan must be practical, reasonable and achievable ✓
- Plan must serve the town as a whole and not individual interests ✓
- Plan must be developed with realistic view of resources
- Plan must favor long-term view over short-term challenges ✓
- Recommendations of committee should be specific, concrete, measurable to provide BoA clear communication regarding community's interests ✓
- Good communication with public and BoA is critical ✓
- Important to recognize that good decision-making takes time, therefore Steering Committee should not be rushed by deadline and BoA should not rush into a decision about property disposition due to short-term budget challenges ✓
- Committee should provide the BoA a recommendation that is specific, defensible and supportive

Vision for Town Square Property:

- Serve as an asset to town for both visitors and residents ✓
- Aesthetically appealing ✓
- Should serve active purpose; not just passive space
- Multiuse space (meeting/gathering/performing/resting/green space; indoor/outdoor or weather-protected use w/ space for 100+) ✓
- Use space for income producing opportunities (for Town or individuals)
- Align with goals of Comprehensive Plan
- Use to build community center/civic auditorium for larger gathering space
- Great landscape, parking, grass, kiosk, seating, tables
- Maintain and add lots of trees for shade – 12” diameter or larger
- Affordable enclosed picnic shelter – multiuse
- Green space which will improve economy
- Open space/green area ✓
- Enhance, not block view of mountains
- Flowing water
- Develop open space first; plan for buildings as a long term goal
- Parking to relieve downtown congestion ✓
- Place to sit and watch the world go by
- Model after other good town square spaces such as Burnsville/Blowing Rock/Highlands
- Public art – permanent or temporary exhibition-style
- Work with DOT to install roundabout for improved pedestrian and traffic access/control
- Recognize square as the town's gateway and create iconic, welcoming space that says something about our community ✓
- Partner with private development for more shops/outdoor eating/green space
- Consider Town's long-term plans; don't do something now that will limit options or create more expense down the road

Upon completion of the visioning exercise, several members noted the large diversity of opinion expressed by committee members, and acknowledged that building true consensus within the community-at-large will require time and extensive education and communication with the public.

After some discussion regarding committee leadership, operating procedure and method by which decisions of the committee would be made, it was decided to continue discussion and request the town manager to continue as facilitator at least through the next meeting of the committee. Ms. Onieal agreed to provide assistance to the committee, but emphasized the need for the steering committee to remain an independent objective body and designate its own spokesperson for purposes of reporting to the public and Board of Aldermen.

The committee agreed to meet again for a 4-hour work session over lunch within the next few weeks to do more brainstorming and work toward presenting recommendations to the Board of Aldermen at the June 14th meeting. The Committee also agreed to recommend an interim use policy, as requests to Town Hall for permission to use the space have increased rapidly with the onset of good weather.

The full committee will be polled for best possible meeting dates between now and June 14, and minutes will be sent out via email to all members of the Town Square Steering Committee, as well as any member of the public who requests copies.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Darlene R. Whisenant, Town Clerk