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Town of Maggie Valley
Board of Aldermen Special Called Meeting
June 16, 2020
MINUTES

Members Present: Mayor Mike Eveland, Aldermen: Tammy Wight, Twinkle Patel, and Clayton Davis

Members Absent: Alderman Phillip Wight

Staff Present: Manager Nathan Clark, Public Works Director Mike Mehaffey, Planner Ron Hancock, and Town Clerk Vickie Best

Others Present: Reporter Kyle Perrotti and Charlee Ruiz, owner of Cardinal Inn

1) **Call Meeting to Order**

Mayor Eveland called the Special Called Meeting to order at 10 am on Tuesday June 16, 2020 in the pavilion adjacent to Town Hall.

2) **Waterfall Presentation**

The first presentation came from **Mosaic Civic Studio and Mattern & Craig Engineers – Surveyors.**

Members present from the Mosaic Civic Studio: Teresa Buckwalter- Project Manager & Design Lead, Brian Newman – Civil Engineering & Survey Lead, Taylor Broyhill – Park & Trail Planning, Deno Contas – Trail design & Construction, and Ed Evans – Municipal Risk & Finance Specialist.

Mosaic Civic Studio is a landscape architecture, planning, and design firm that collaborates with government agencies, community organizations, and commercial entities throughout the Southeast to create inspiring destinations that elevate quality of life and empower communities through authentic, creative, and context-specific planning and design.

Ed Evans, previous Municipal Manager is well versed in municipal law, finances, etc. The trail/waterfall in Seven Devils, NC (located in Avery and Watauga Counties) came from a rough piece of property similar to Maggie Valley's waterfall property.

Like Seven Devils, there is a need for parking and there are residential properties around the falls with some tributaries. There should be six (6) to eight (8) parking spaces even if some parking must be along Old Still Road. This project can be done in phases over a period of years.

Mr. Evans commented on how popular an amenity can become quickly. Mr. Evans is familiar with seeking grant funds and getting donations as well as municipalities working with insurance companies making the project as safe as possible with little liability.

Although parking will take some creative thinking, it has been determined that there is not a good access point from Loveland Drive. Park benches could be added to create more of a park feel.

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Because the land is steep, the trails will zig-zag up the slope. The trails and possibly foot bridges across the streams will create a lot of interaction with the waterfall.

Otter Falls in Seven Devils is between eight (8) and ten (10) acres. Maggie Valley's area is approximately six (6) acres.

Mr. Contas, a trail builder with Benchmark Trials, stated that like Otter Falls, Maggie Valley's falls has thick vegetation/undergrowth. Ms. Buckwalter will use native materials in her landscape architecture.

When seeking grant funding, connectivity is everything. The Lake James Greenways trail will eventually go to Asheville as will Blowing Rock to Boone. Outdoor industry taps into tourism economy.

Signage, both educational and announcing the funding partners, is also an important element.

Overview:

- Old Still Road will likely require improvements for park access.
- Park design must be harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood and respect the privacy of adjacent residents.
- Opportunities exist to provide stunning views for park users.
- A well-designed trail system would eliminate the need for stairs.
- Loveland Drive does not provide feasible access for a trailhead.
- Trails will need to navigate numerous tributaries to Big Spring Branch.
- View from Loveland Drive looking downstream provides opportunities for park users to view the stream and falls.
- Existing park and picnic area can be improved to showcase long-range views and provide a memorable user experience.

For the scope and approach, Mosaic Civic Studio would need approximately twelve (12) months.

- Direction Setting & Site Analysis:

Mosaic Civic Studio and Mattern & Craig will conduct a kickoff workshop and site visit with the Maggie Valley Team to ensure a clear understanding of expectations, the planning process, timeline, and the public engagement strategy. The kick-off will include an on-site visioning and ideation session to identify opportunities, constraints, and new ideas for the property.

- Conceptual Site Designs:

Information from Phase 1 research and field analysis combined with Town Staff's knowledge of the site and understanding of local recreation needs will equip Mosaic to develop preliminary site concepts, trail or boardwalk alignments, and potential park elements. Destination-quality amenities and playful, distinct features such as a unique hiking trail network, youth mountain bike trails, observation tower, or aerial adventure facilities can distinguish this park as a

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destination for a wide spectrum of users while complementing the property's signature waterfall feature.

The preliminary concepts will be provided to Town staff and the Board of Aldermen for feedback before testing the concept through public engagement.

- Community Engagement:

Public engagement is at the heart of any project's success. Purposeful and sincere community engagement is critical to cultivating public trust, expanding support for the project, and addressing concerns early in the planning process. For the waterfall property park design, Mosaic envisions a drop-in style open house where citizens can provide their feedback on the conceptual design, potential amenities, and programming. The concept and design elements will be illustrated via a preliminary site plan, photo-realistic renderings, and precedent images. Community input will be expanded through an online survey that mirrors the content of the public workshop but provides an opportunity for citizens to engage at their convenience.

- Programmatic Park Concepts:

After the community engagement phase is complete, Mosaic will refine the overall concept to reflect public input while taking into consideration the site's physical constraints as well as ease of maintenance and phased implementation.

Mosaic will proceed with developing more detailed sub-packages for park elements, including trail/boardwalk/stair system, wayfinding, pedestrian bridge(s), trailhead parking, overlook and lighting. The concepts can include a menu of park improvements such as youth mountain bike trails or a pump track, observation tower, or aerial adventure facility identified on a composite project site plan.

- Final Design-Build Sub-Packages for Bid

The final comprehensive plan will provide for the Maggie Valley Waterfall Park clear communication phased implementation strategy that competitively positions the town to pursue grant funding for each park element.

The final deliverable will be a Park Program Plan that includes a menu of individual sub-packages with which the Town can solicit bids. Each sub-package within the plan will include preliminary plans, cross-sections, and specifications for material selection, survey layout, installation method, permitted submittals required, and project schedule prioritization. The plan will also include recommended improvements to Old Still Road for access to the trailhead parking area and any associated utility relocations or extensions required.

Ms. Buckwalter assured Council that Maggie Valley would be a priority, immediate action (if approved) will be taken, and having several team members will allow for experts in waterfalls to

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make this a destination. Generations for many years will enjoy this endeavor by the Town of Maggie Valley.

The Town can seek funding from RTP, PARTF, and local electric companies, etc. There can be fund raisers, naming rights, Public-private partnerships, and memorials to increase funding.

Mayor Eveland stated that the waterfalls should be done in phases over multiple years.

Alderman T. Wight questioned how soon the Town could start applying for grants.

Mr. Evens stated that he has seen receiving grant funding to take anywhere from six (6) months to two (2) years. Granting agencies want the community involved and the project shovel ready.

Alderman T. Wight, a longtime proponent for the waterfall stated that younger family's vacation for an experience.

When Alderman Patel took her children to the area, she found it difficult to turn around.

Manager Clark concurred adding that is why advance instructions for parking will be particularly important.

The second presentation came from **Destination by Design**.

Tim Johnson, Senior Planner, addressed Council providing some background on his education, Haywood Community College, Appalachian State, and Western Carolina University.

This is a challenging site but there are so many interesting opportunities. It is not obvious where the trail is; there is just a small opening in the woods.

The trailhead is always important to get people to stop; therefore, the trailhead must be inviting. Mr. Johnson envisioned a large staircase that disappears into the woods. Then the trail would lead to the next set of stairs/steps. The idea is to keep the trail user curious and to provide visitors with a sense of wonder. "Pull visitors up and into the waterfall."

The trail would be flagged on the ground. There are only five (5) to eight (8) trail builders in the Southeast. Maggie Valley's project is a hiking trail. Deno Contos with Benchmark Trails is an expert trail builder (Mr. Contos also works with Mosaic Civic Studio).

Destination by Design is a one-stop-shop firm. Council will be dealing with one person from beginning to end. Site plans with different options will be provided.

Alderman Davis questioned the parking issues.

Mr. Johnson agreed that it was a confined space but would need to see the survey data to guide how and where the parking can be placed.

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Mr. Johnson provided information on design and switchbacks that would make the trail sustainable. The grade has got to be low enough that rainwater runs across the trail in sheets and not down the trail washing away soil. The volume of water must be limited.

The design must keep people where you want them and keep them away from where you do not. There would be less maintenance with stone steps.

Council thanked Mr. Johnson for his presentation.

Alderman T. Wight liked the presentation from Mosaic Civic Studio because of their vision and ideas such as public/private partnership, zip lines, mountain biking, memorial benches, and naming rights. Alderman Patel concurred adding that Mosaic Civic Studio brought a whole team with different backgrounds and expertise.

Alderman Davis agreed adding that the estimated cost is higher.

Mayor Eveland like the vision of the stairway leading off into the woods. Mosaic Civic Studio wants to use all the property. Just highlighting the waterfall would be less expensive. More people, more time at the park- the more parking will be needed. It all depends on the vision. Mayor Eveland stated that he is not opposed to the project but is opposed to the timing of it due to the uncertainty of the future of local governments and funding.

Manager Clark stated that the money could be encumbered, where it would roll over into the Fund balance and could be pulled at any time with a budget amendment. With the current environment, the nation, counties, and towns/cities have pushed back projects because of the uncertainties with sales tax, the reevaluations, and tax collection. Staff and Council will know more in December 2020 or January 2021.

Alderman Davis was interested in a vote on the two firms that provided presentations today. Planning and design takes time and the \$30,000 would have no impact on next year's budget. Alderman Patel concurred, adding that in her experience planning and design takes time. By waiting "we" are just delaying the project. Use this time right now to get them started.

Manager Clark responded that there was no plan/vision for Parham Park, and it took four (4) to six (6) years to complete.

The Mary Rathbone Rich Park was completed in less than a year because there was a plan. Getting the plan helps Maggie Valley in every aspect, to get started and hit milestones.

Both firms share the same trail design with the zig-zag pattern. Alderman T. Wight added that low maintenance is important.

Mayor Eveland still believes that the availability of parking is most important to having completed trails. The bridging platform is wooden and that would require continued maintenance.

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Alderman Patel stated that Mosaic Civic Studio wants to get momentum going throughout the area and then release the sub-packages so that work can begin.

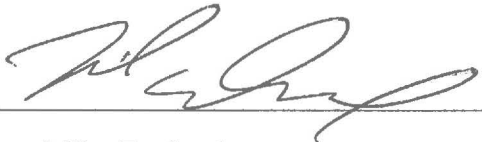
Manager Clark stated that both firms are excellent. Mattern & Craig Engineers * Surveyors helped with the Moody Farm Road Sidewalk and the Mary Rathbone Rich Park. Planner Hancock has worked with both Mosaic Civic Studio and Destination by Design. Manager Clark added that he has known Ed Evans several years through Manager's Circles/Meetings.

3) **Consideration of Contract Award**

ALDERMAN PATEL MADE A MOTION TO ACCEPT THE RFQ FOR \$30,000 FROM MOSAIC CIVIC STUDIO. MOTION CARRIED.

4) **Adjournment**

ON MOTION OF ALDERMAN T. WIGHT WITH ALL IN FAVOR, THE SPECIAL CALLED MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:02 PM.



Mayor Mike Eveland



Vickie Best, Town Clerk, NCCMC & CMC

