

Board of Aldermen Budget Visioning Meeting
Town Hall Board Room, Maggie Valley Town Hall
Wednesday March 27, 2024, 12 pm

Members Present:

Mayor Mike Eveland, Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Owens, Alderman John Hinton, Alderman Phillip Wight, Alderman Tim Wise

Staff Present:

Town Manager Vickie Best, Town Clerk Kathy Johnson, Interim Finance Officer Shayne Wheeler, Town Planner Sam Cullen, Assistant Town Planner Noah Taylor, Public Works Director Mike Mehaffey, Senior WWTP Operator Seth Boyd, Police Chief Matthew Boger

Others Present:

No others were present.

Media Present:

Brionna Dellara, Waynesville Mountaineer

Meeting Called to Order

Mayor Mike Eveland called the Visioning Meeting to order at 12:01 am on Wednesday March 27, 2024, in the Maggie Valley Town Hall Boardroom 3987 Soco Road, Maggie Valley, NC 28751.

Grant

Alderman Tim Wise said the Town has received a \$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina for upgrades to the Pavilion. He applied for the grant on behalf of the Town last month.

Tax Rate

Manager Best said the tax rate is .40 per \$100 assessed value. The proposed tax rate is to remain the same. She is proud of having the lowest tax rate in Haywood County and she would like to keep it that way.

New Positions

The staff is asking to add three new positions this Budget year: Chief Boger said due to the growth of the Town and increase in population he is requesting two new positions for the Police Department. Currently Josh Kelly is sponsored by MV in the yearlong BLET Program. Chief Boger said qualified people are getting harder to find. Public Works Director Mike Mehaffey said he is requesting one Public Works position.

Manager Best said she will need to add an administration position next year. There was discussion between staff and Board members about the cost of new employees and how the growth of the Town will impact the need to add new employees.

Mayor Eveland said as growth continues, the Town will begin to see revenue coming in to offset the cost of the new positions. He said the new evaluation on the tax rate next year could absorb the cost of the new employees. Mr. Mehaffey updated the Board on the new developments that would be bringing in tax revenue within the next few years. He said PW has already spent a lot of time overseeing all the new developments.

Mayor Eveland said creating the new positions should help alleviate a lot of the overtime at the Police Department. Chief Boger explained the officers were currently working a lot of overtime to keep all shifts covered. Alderman Tim Wise asked Manager Best that in the next three years there were two Police Officers, one PW, and one Administrative position. PW Director Mike Mehaffey said he could not say what they will need later, but currently he needs one position for PW. He said the part-time public works employee worked full time hours last week.

New Vehicles

Manager Best said staff will be requesting four vehicles in the Budget. One Administrative (Ford Explorer), one vehicle for the sewer department (Super duty), and two police vehicles (Dodge Durango). Alderman Phillip Wight asked if administration was replacing or adding a vehicle. Manager Best said the transmission is going out in the Ford Explorer and needs to be replaced. She reminded the Board that the admin. car is also used by Board members if going anywhere on behalf of the Town.

Mr. Mehaffey answered questions from Board members about the new truck needed by the sewer department. He said it is hard to give an exact amount of what it will cost, he estimates the cost will be between \$57,000 and \$68,000.

Chief Boger said the two Dodge Durango's are in stock and will be around \$65,000 each. Mr. Mehaffey said Public Works does the maintenance on the Police Vehicles and there is a diagnostic tool that needs to be included in the Police department budget. The tool is around \$9,200 and will diagnose a mechanical issue and give instructions on fixing the problem.

Cost of Living Adjustment

Ms. Best said the Consumer Price Index for 2023 was 8.7% and the employees received a 4% COLA raise. The CPI in 2024 is 3.2% and the proposed COLA is 4%, to help catch up with the current rate of pay. Ms. Best and Planner Cullen attended a class and everyone across the state of North Carolina is having trouble recruiting and keeping employees. She said now everyone is focusing on retention to keep the recruiting process down to a minimum. There should be a pay classification study done every five years and next year will be the five-year mark for the Town.

Mayor Eveland said he would like to see career-track raises implemented again for employees. That will also help with retention. There was discussion between staff and Board members on merit raises. Mr. Cullen said it would take time to implement the career-track. Mayor Eveland said this could be worked on for next year's budget.

Town Facilities

Manager Best said the \$10,000 that was received from the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina would be used for upgrades to the pavilion. Mr. Mehaffey said he has looked at prices to add a covered area in front of the pavilion that will cover most of the cemented area. He said the cover would be 20x16x10. The estimate for the cover is \$12,542 (\$8,550 for building and \$4000 for labor). He was asked to get prices for picnic tables for the pavilion area. For composite tables like the ones in the parks is \$1,700 for each table and that does not include shipping and handling. The total cost of the project including cover, three picnic tables (one of which will be wheelchair accessible) is estimated to cost between \$17,000 and \$18,000. He said this estimate does not include any timber which would be cosmetic. Town cost would be \$7,000 to \$8,000 after the grant has been applied.

Electronic Sign at the Festival Grounds

Manager Best said the electronics in the Festival Ground sign are antiquated and is increasingly becoming unusable. She asked the Board for their opinion on how important the sign is to them. Aldermen Jim Owens said according to a poll that was conducted, the festival grounds ranked number four on the list as to why people come to the area. There was much discussion among Board members about tourism and the impact it has on Maggie Valley and TDA funding.

Board Discussion

Alderman Tim Wise said the Board has talked about outdoor recreation and the need to have more activities. The problem is always where to put it. There is a piece of property on Moody Farm Road that is for sale and the owner is willing to sell a three-acre portion of the property. Part of the three acres is in the floodway and the remainder of the three-acres is in the floodplain which limits what can be built on the property. He proposes if the property can be purchased at a reasonable price, tables could be put along the creek and the upper portion could eventually be used for a pickle ball court, tennis court, volleyball, or horseshoe's (adult outdoor recreation).

Alderman Jim Owens said he feels the Town should speak to the property owner and get a price on the land and see if it is reasonably priced. He said discussion on what type of activity to be placed on the property could be made later but feels there should be more discussion about what types of regulations that is placed on the property.

Mayor Eveland asked Mr. Cullen to speak with the owners to see what the cost of the property would be.

Alderman Wise spoke about the importance of informing the residents about what is going on in the Town. He would like to see a sign with the design posted at the sweetbriar parking lot so residents could see what it will look like when it is finished. He said it is about being proactive and controlling the narrative of what the Town is doing. There was discussion between Board members about the sunshine list, website, social media, and putting news blasts out to introduce new employees. He said as the Town looks to hire a new employee, the task of communicating could be added to the job description.

Mayor Eveland spoke about the history of the Sweetbriar and Ferguson property and said now the Town would have public parking. There was discussion on what to name the parking lots.

Alderman Phillip Wight said the dressing rooms behind the stage at the festival grounds gets really hot and the Town should look at putting a unit to blow cold air. Mr. Mehaffey suggested putting exhaust fans in to move the air around.

Mr. Mehaffey has spoken with Sonja Michels, owner of Creekwood Village Resort about paving the east side entrance of the parking lot (what has been known as the Ferguson property). This road will allow her guests to use this entrance instead of the main entrance to the Festival Grounds. There will need to be continued discussion on the Creekwood Village Resort sign that will need to be moved. Mayor Eveland said he feels the paving of the road and moving the sign should be put in the budget for next year.

Alderman Phillip Wight expressed concern of drainage on Riddle Cove Road. Mr. Mehaffey said he would look at it, the entrance usually needs work done every year.

Mr. Mehaffey said he had two projects to mention to the Board for Non-Powel Bill funds. One of the projects is Nicholas Lane, at the cost of \$65,000 and the Towns portion would be around \$23,000. The other project being Serene Trail, at a cost of \$40,000 and the Towns portion would be around \$12,000.

Discussion between Board members and staff about possible projects around Town Hall Mr. Mehaffey said he would get estimates on replacing the windows and doors in the cafeteria.

Public Works Director Mike Mehaffey

- The sewer line creek crossing elimination project was pretty much done just waiting on a sign off on it and getting it out to bid. The sewer line extension will be roughly \$240,000 to \$300,000 range for the sewer line extension and there is some funding from the ARPA fund.
- New ariels for HC usually update sewer maps when those new ones come out. The cost is not yet known because the contact person he has been working with has changed jobs and is no longer with McGill and Associates.
- A few line-item increase: Brush disposal, work uniforms and sludge removal/landfill fees.

Alderman Jim Owens

- Mr. Owens would like the Town to look into placing jumping pillows in the park behind the Town Hall. He said it would be a huge amount of fun at a low cost with no maintenance. Mayor Eveland asked staff to look into the cost and gather more information about the jumping pillows. Ms. Best said she would check into grant funding and insurance.

- He said he was proud of the completion of the veteran's park and said it would be nice to honor hometown heroes and their families. He suggested selling banners to be hung up on veterans' day and Memorial Day. The cost would go to the families to buy the banner and the Town would put the banners up. The only expense to the Town is manpower putting the banners up.

There has been previous discussion between Staff and Board members about covering the main part of the hallway, to make it look more professional. Mr. Mehaffey said he would get the pricing for the cost of the project.

Aldermen John Hinton spoke about:

- He would like a better dialogue with the water department. He gets calls all the time and has to bother Mr. Mehaffey because he cannot reach anyone in the water department.
- He spoke about the Fall clean and the creek project.
- Asked for an update on complaints that have been received about stuff being built on the creek.
- Mishap with the appointments on the ABC board.
- Made great strides with the new additions to the planning Board.

Mr. Cullen answered questions about Board term limits and what is required.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Alderman Phillip Wight to adjourn the meeting at 2:29 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Attest:



Mayor Mike Eveland



Vickie Best, Town Manager



Kathy Johnson, Town Clerk

