

**TOWN OF SEVEN DEVILS
PUBLIC HEARING & TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**

March 16, 2017

The Seven Devils Town Council met for a Public Hearing for the Recreational Trails Program Grant on Thursday, March 16, 2017, at 5:00PM and in a Regular Meeting at 5:30PM at Town Hall. Present at the Public Hearing were Mayor Larry Fontaine, Mayor Pro Tem Brad Lambert, Council Members Kay Ehlinger, David Ehmig, David Hooper, and Manager Debbie Powers; Town Attorney Rob Angle joined at the Regular Meeting; the minutes were recorded by Town Clerk Hillary Gropp.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council members and citizens recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fontaine explained the rules of a Public Hearing and then asked for a motion to open the Public Hearing.

Member Hooper called to open the Public Hearing at 5:00PM. Member Ehlinger seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING PRESENTATION

Manager Powers gave a brief explanation the purpose of this Public Hearing was to discuss the Recreational Trails Grant opportunity.

Manager Powers introduced the speakers, Eric Hiegl and Ben Lucas with the Blue Ridge Conservancy and Kelly Coffey with High Country Council of Governments.

Ben Lucas gave a history of the Blue Ridge Conservancy. The recently acquired grants allowed for the purchases of the 245-acre Peak Mountain tract and the 20 acre Penland tract. This is a prime opportunity to protect a significant ridgeline and expand public access which is a main mission of the BR Conservancy. The BR Conservancy is completely supportive of all measures necessary, including annexation in to complete future trails.

Member Ehlinger initiated discussion about possible camping in the future, however it is too preliminary to be determined yet. Member Hooper is extremely pleased with land acquisition to date.

Kelly Coffey reports these are federal funds being filtered through the state trails program and priority is given to hiking trails and trail extensions. This grant application should be favorable because of matching funds and the project is construction ready. The grant is a 25-75% split with the Town of Seven Devils contributing \$20,000, the

grant amount is \$60,000 for a total project of \$80,000. Mr. Coffey will follow up if resident letters of support are needed to help persuade to acquire grant.

Eric Hiegl offered positive remarks for the cooperative relationship with Seven Devils in realizing the goal of the Recreational Trails Program and provided additional details about the Penland tract and removal of existing structures, as well as property division for best use.

PUBLIC COMMENTS- NONE

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

With no public comments, Member Ehlinger made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Member Hooper seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously.

RECESS

Member Ehlinger made a motion to recess. Member Hooper seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously. Council went into recess at 5:25PM.

CALL TO ORDER FROM RECESS – 5:30PM

Mayor Fontaine asked for a motion to come out of recess. Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to come out of from recess. Member Hooper seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously.

ADOPT AGENDA

Mayor Fontaine asked to modify the Agenda and not adopt New Business 12) A. (ii). Member Hooper made the motion to adopt the modified Agenda. Member Ehmig seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

**ADOPT MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING & TOWN COUNCIL MEETING-
FEBRUARY 14, 2017**

ADOPT MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING- FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Member Ehmig made the motion to adopt the Consent Agenda. Member Hooper seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Kay Lambert, 430 Wildcat Rocks Road, announced Safety Fest will be held on Saturday, July 1, 2017.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Manager Powers gave a summary of the Administrative Update.

- Hillary Gropp completed Notary school and will soon be official.
- Helga Sappington completed and passed the Property Tax Collection course.
- Manager Powers and Mayor Fontaine attended a Re-districting meeting. Representative Jonathan Jordan was also in attendance at this informational meeting.
- Manager Powers has recently attended the following meetings: RTCC, HC COG Manager's Meeting, Watauga County Sales Tax Distribution
- The Town of Seven Devils will celebrate Arbor Day and plant a tree on April 28, 2017.
- Updates were given for Permits, Projects, Complaints, Real Estate Closings.
- A photo was displayed of the new directional sign for Otter Falls.
- HCMA will be meeting on Thursday, April 20, 2017 in Banner Elk, NC.

OLD BUSINESS – NONE

NEW BUSINESS

Sales tax distribution from Watauga County will potentially change from a payback of 60% to 70% causing a \$21,000 revenue loss. To date, a final meeting has **not been** scheduled to resolve this issue with the County, Blowing Rock and Beech Mountain.

The Town Council of Seven Devils approved Resolution #2017-02 as follows:

**RESOLUTION
2017-02**

A RESOLUTION BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF SEVEN DEVILS, NORTH CAROLINA, URGING THE WATAUGA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TO MAINTAIN THE AD VALOREM METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION OF SALES TAX IN WATAUGA COUNTY

WHEREAS, N.C.G.S. §105-472 provides for the allocation of sales tax between cities and counties within North Carolina; and
WHEREAS, N.C.G.S. §105-472(b) allows a Board of County Commissioners to determine on a yearly basis, whether such allocation is made on a per capita distribution or an ad valorem distribution; and

WHEREAS, the ad valorem method of sales tax distribution recognizes the value of property is distributed equitably throughout Watauga County; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Seven Devils appreciates and values its good working relationship with Watauga County, and the ability to mutually benefit the citizens of both the Town of Seven Devils and Watauga County; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Seven Devils looks forward to continuing to assist Watauga County in addressing financial needs with Sales Tax revenues should the ad valorem method be used in determining Sales Tax distribution for fiscal year 2017-2018; and

WHEREAS, a mutually financially beneficial relationship was established previously between the Town of Seven Devils and Watauga County; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Seven Devils would like to continue this shared financially beneficial relationship.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of the Town of Seven Devils, North Carolina, hereby strongly urges the Watauga County Commissioners to exercise their authority during the month of April 2017, to maintain the ad valorem method of Sales Tax distribution in Watauga County.

Adopted this the 16th day of March 2017.

Larry Fontaine, Mayor

Hillary Gropp, Town Clerk

Member Hooper made the motion to approve; Mayor Pro Tem Lambert seconded the motion; the members agreed unanimously. ~CLOSED~

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Board – No February meeting

Public Works—No February meeting

Public Safety Committee

Recreation Commission – No February meeting

TDA

ABC Board

Public Safety Department

Police Report

Fire Report

Financial Report

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Member Ehmig thanked everyone for their well wishes during his recent surgical recovery.

ADJOURN

Member Ehlinger made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Lambert seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:55pm.

Larry Fontaine, Mayor

Hillary Gropp, Town Clerk