

THE TOWN OF SEVEN DEVILS
ANNUAL TOWN COUNCIL RETREAT
MINUTES—SPECIAL SESSION

May 7, 2013

The Seven Devils Town Council met in special session on Wednesday, May 7, 2013, at Town Hall. Present were Mayor Larry Fontaine, Mayor Pro Tem Brad Lambert, Council Members Kay Ehlinger, David Ehmig, and David Hooper. Also present was Town Manager Ed Evans. The minutes were recorded by Sara Miller, Town Clerk and Ed Evans, Town Manager.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fontaine called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM. Mayor Fontaine began the meeting by thanking the Council for all of their hard work and for a successful year.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council members and citizens recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPT AGENDA

Mayor Fontaine proposed adding a ‘cell tower discussion item’ to the Open Session. Member Hooper made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended with this item. Member Ehmig seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

THE COUNCIL AND ITS BUSINESS

The Council discussed exchange of opinions, points of view, and ideas about issues that come before the Council.

Mayor Fontaine commented that in looking at last year’s goals, the Town and the Council have improved communication with the community via the website, posting minutes for all committees, and other postings at Town Hall. He felt that the Council had done a good job of expressing their intentions and goals to the Seven Devils Community.

Member Ehlinger agreed with Mayor Fontaine on this issue and pointed out that the Council could check off numerous goals listed from last year’s retreat as being complete or in process.

The Council also discussed the public’s image of Seven Devils and thought we are on the right track and that we will continue to work on creating and maintaining our positive image.

Mayor Pro Tem Lambert commented that one area we need to pursue is asking to be included as a named town in SB 287, Notice Publication by Some Local Govs. by talking with Senator Soucek in a telephone meeting, or using another way to communicate with him regarding this Senate Bill that would positively affect the Town, if we were included. Manager Evans explained that the Bill addresses the ability for Public Hearing/Meeting notices to be posted online instead of through local newspaper publication. Mayor Pro Tem Lambert proposed that the Council draft a letter and mail or fax to Senator Soucek that would express the Town’s interest in being included in this Bill. Member Ehmig made a motion to approve the Town’s support of the Bill mentioned above. Member Hooper seconded the motion. The members agreed unanimously. Manager Evans stated he would draft a letter for approval and signature.

Members discussed issues regarding Town communication with the community, suggesting such things as mass emailing, survey taking to measure resident interests, and social media outlets. The Council also discussed and decided that compiling an email list of citizens is in the best interest of citizens so that we can more effectively communicate instead of having to rely on the website or the Echo newsletter.

The Town Clerk left the meeting at 10:50AM.

Manager Evans assumed the responsibility of recording the minutes.

Members discussed the appointment process for the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem. The Rules of Procedure for the Town were referenced and the Council agreed that the current Rules of Procedure address the issue, stating that the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem selection process will occur each election year at the first meeting following certification of the election, which will be in December every other year. At this meeting, the Town Manager will moderate until the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem is determined.

The Council discussed whether or not a Council Member should write an article for each issue of the Echo. A decision was made to leave the process “as is” and not have a formal policy about this issue.

The Council and the CIP/Budget

The Council briefly discussed the CIP and Budget format and process and determined they are satisfied with the way we are presenting the budget, CIP, and budget reports. The Council desired to continue to include capital infrastructure projects, noting that long-range planning for future needs is necessary.

The Council discussed the current implications of the property re-valuation currently in process in Watauga County. Manager Evans reported that he learned from the Watauga County Tax Assessor that values may be similar to what they were eight years ago or possibly higher based on current data, but that we will have to wait to see the final assessment.

The Council discussed our current loans. Manager Evans reported that one loan will be satisfied this month, that another will be satisfied in October 2013, and that a third loan will be satisfied in September 2014. This was good news!

The Council informally recessed for lunch at 1:05 PM, while remaining in the Council Chambers, while discussions continued.

Long-range and short-term goals

Short-term goals FY2012-2013

1. Engage in dialogue with the Lakes Community, as we work with them on their roads, to develop a recreation area and access to the ponds, and the potential creation of walking trails in the area
2. Developing a PARS course
3. Enhancing recreation opportunities in Town
4. Developing an E-Democracy type site for greater transparency and public comment
5. Developing a location for fishing (ponds)
6. Developing trails
7. Putting minutes of all boards and committees on our website
8. Condensing short-term goals to bullet form to publish somewhere in Town Hall to keep items fresh
9. Developing a thermometer type gauge/graphic to show accomplishments
10. Discuss storm-water management with our Town engineer to understand requirements

Long Term Goals FY2012-2013

11. Fund a second road exit out of Seven Devils – Develop a plan
12. Invest in snow removal equipment
13. Purchase or otherwise acquire the Otter Falls property for a park
14. Expedite installation of Snowcloud water infrastructure
15. Review and revise storm-water management plan
16. Review ordinances at least every five years
17. Create a greater role for the Planning Board including potentially addressing the Storm-water management issue and ordinance

The Council discussed the goals from last year, noting that several were complete or in process. From last year's goals, it was noted that 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10 had been either completed or were in progress. It was agreed that 2 and 6 were continuing goals and that number 9 was not practical. It was agreed that number 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 were all in progress or were on the horizon, and that these were goals that need to be continued.

Closed Session – Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6), Personnel Issues

At 1:55 PM, Mayor Fontaine made a motion to go into Closed Session. Member Ehlinger seconded the motion and members agreed unanimously. Discussion ensued.

At 2:30 PM, Mayor Fontaine asked Manager Evans to be dismissed from Council Chambers.

At 3:10 PM, Member Ehlinger asked Manager Evans to return to the Council Chambers.

At 3:53 PM, Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to return to Open Session. Member Hooper seconded the motion and all Members agreed unanimously.

Open Session

Mayor Fontaine asked for Council comments. The Mayor commented that he would like to add an issue to the next Council Agenda; a discussion and possible policy creation regarding inserts and stuffers in Town Water Bills, other Town mail, and the Echo newsletter. Manager Evans said he would add this issue to the upcoming Town Council Agenda.

Mayor Pro Tem Lambert stated that he would like to see the Town Council purchase some type of attractive, town-identifying nametags for the Council Members to wear to various functions. Member Ehlinger stated that she would pursue this and produce a proto-type.

At 4:07 PM, Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to adjourn. Member Ehmig seconded the motion. All Members agreed and the meeting dismissed.

Larry Fontaine, Mayor

Sara Miller, Town Clerk

Ed Evans, Town Manager