

Town of Seven Devils
Tuesday, December 12, 2023
Organizational Meeting
5:30pm

The Seven Devils Town Council Organizational Meeting was held on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at Town Hall.

Attendance included and seated at the boardroom table: Wayne Bonomo, Larry Fontaine, Brad Lambert, and Leigh Sasse. A quorum was met.

Seated in the audience was Outgoing Council Member Jeffrey Williams and Council Elect Bob Bridges.

Staff attendance: Town Manager Johnathan Harris, Fire Chief Matt Millsaps, Town Attorney Rob Angle; Town Clerk Hillary Gropp recorded the minutes.

INVOCATION

Larry Fontaine gave the Invocation for the Town Council meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council members and citizens recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION

Larry Fontaine recognized Jeffrey Williams for his service and contributions to the Town Council during 2019-2023; a plaque was presented to Jeffrey Williams.

CALL TO ORDER

Town Manager Harris called the meeting to order at 5:37pm.

OATH OF OFFICE

Town Clerk Gropp administered the oath of office to Wayne Bonomo, Bob Bridges and Larry Fontaine as Members of the Town Council.

Member Bridges took his seat at the boardroom table.

NOMINATIONS FOR MAYOR

Town Manager Harris asked for nominations for Mayor.

Member Lambert nominated Member Larry Fontaine; Member Bonomo seconded the motion. All members agreed.

Town Clerk Gropp administered the oath of office to Larry Fontaine as Mayor of the Town Council. The gavel was turned over to Mayor Fontaine to continue the meeting.

NOMINATIONS FOR MAYOR PRO TEM

Mayor Fontaine asked for nominations for Mayor Pro Tem.

Member Bonomo nominated Member Lambert; Mayor Fontaine seconded the motion. All members agreed.

Town Clerk Gropp administered the oath of office to Brad Lambert as Mayor Pro Tem of the Town Council.

ADOPT AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to adopt the agenda; Member Bridges seconded the motion. All members agreed.

ADOPT MINUTES

Town Council minutes of November 14, 2023 – Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to approve and adopt the minutes; Member Sasse seconded the motion. All members agreed.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Mary Ballinger – 526 Buckeye Lane

Thanked Fire Chief Millsaps for efforts to address an emergency exit plan for citizens; Requests the Town Council reevaluate the water billing tiers, notably 4500+ gallons and sources were cited for water rate comparisons in the state; Asked the Town Council to provide 1 complimentary data log to citizens with high usage; Thanked Public Works department for efforts to clear roads after winter weather; Thanked Jewel McKinney for organizing the food drive.

Tom Bookstaver – 231 Snowcloud Drive

Reminded citizens of the importance of cleaning and inspecting fireplaces, as well as smoke/CO detectors be maintained; Warned citizens of the dangers of space heater, base board heat and furnaces and to be aware of combustibles located near these types of heat sources; Do not use extension cords, but instead plug directly into the outlet and use properly rated extension cords for holiday decorations.

**Clerks Note – Citizens who spoke provided a written letter with entire public comment to Town Clerk Gropp.*

OLD BUSINESS – ABC Audit Presentation – Bonnie Betz -High Country ABC

Highlights of the ABC Audit include the following:

- Clean audit & no budget findings
- Overall financial position measured by net assets of more than \$1.3 million, an increase of nearly 1% over last year.
- \$5.3 million in total sales, an increase of 3.75% over last year.
- In the US, there are 17 alcohol controlled states and North Carolina is ranked #2 in sales, behind #1 of Michigan.
- Discussion has occurred about enclosure of the back area of the ABC store, to increase storage for inventory.
- Over \$69,000 or 12% of the store's profits have been given to alcohol education and law enforcement through grants for agencies such as - High Country Caregivers, Western Youth Network, YMCA, Mountain Alliance, and Club 12.
- NC General Statutes requires the ABC store to give back 3 ½% of gross sales to the three (3) local towns of Seven Devils, Banner Elk, and Sugar Mountain. This year the High Country ABC store has given \$648,000 or 9%, well above the requirement.
- Web based ordering program for local restaurants was implemented last year and is very successful, as almost all the restaurants are using this program.
- A steel ramp was installed at the back of the ABC store to help with unloading.
- SB 527 Omnibus has passed the House Finance Committee – the key issues include Sales on Sunday, ABC store hours on holidays – New Year's, July 4th & Labor Day and restaurants could purchase alcohol from any ABC store within the county.

Questions about the Net Position/Operating Ratio as submitted by Council Member Bridges were answered. Bonnie Betz also reminded citizens that Crown Royal will recycle the cloth bag to be used for care package for the military.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Code of Ethics – Town Council

Town Council members reviewed and agreed to the Code of Ethics; Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to adopt the Code of Ethics; Member Bridges seconded the motion; All members agreed. ~CLOSED~

Signatures of all Council members will be obtained by Town Clerk Gropp at the conclusion of meeting.

B. Board/Committee Appointments/Reappointments for 2024

Mayor Fontaine explained these recommendations were in consultation with the Chairperson of the Boards/Committees, and the Town Council approves the appointment.

Mayor Fontaine discussed the quantity of applicants exceeded the available seats to be filled and said all applications will be kept on file for future consideration of vacancies. Mayor Fontaine encouraged citizens to attend meetings.

Board of Adjustment:

Barbara Hurlbrink – Term Expires 12/2026
Quinn Morris – Term Expires 12/2026
Dave Matney – Alternate – Term Expires 12/2024
James West – Alternate - Term Expires 12/2025

Planning Board:

Joan Streightiff – Term Expires 12/2025
John Wells IV – Term Expires 12/2025
Cindy Miller - Term Expires 12/2025

Public Works Committee:

Robert Michaud – Term Expires 12/2026
Dave Matney – Term Expires 12/2025
James West – Term Expires 12/2026

Parks & Recreation Committee:

Faye Brock – Term Expires 12/2026
Sarah Brendle – Term Expires 12/2026
Theresa Lindgren - Term Expires 12/2026

Tourism Development Authority (TDA):

Alejandra Fernandez – Term Expires 12/2025
Leigh Sasse – Term Expires 12/2025

Public Safety Committee:

Kay Lambert – Term Expires 12/2026
Phyllis Miller – Term Expires 12/2026

Member Bridges made a motion to approve the appointments for the Board & Committees; Mayor Pro Tem Lambert seconded the motion. All members agreed. ~CLOSED~

**C. Set Public Hearing – UDO Amendments & Nuisance Ordinance Updates
January 9, 2024, at 5:00pm**

Town Manager Harris explained these are recommendations made by the Planning Board to the Town Council and a Public Hearing is required.

Member Bridges made a motion to set a Public Hearing on January 9, 2024, at 5:00pm; Member Sasse seconded the motion. All members agreed.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Town Manager Harris provided the administrative update:

- Avery & Watauga counties have certified the results of Municipal Elections as Wayne Bonomo – 76 votes – 4 year term; Larry Fontaine – 75 votes – 4 year term; Bob Bridges – 70 votes – 2 year term.
- Property tax reminder have been mailed.
- A response has been submitted to the LGC about the Town's audit.
- Two EMR's have passed the state exam with a total of 8 certified EMR for Seven Devils Fire Department.
- Real estate closings for 2023 totaled 36, compared to 2022 total = 60
- 5 new home construction permits have been issued in 2023, with a total currently under construction at 9.

- 21 miscellaneous permits have been issued by the Zoning Administrator in 2023.
- Town Hall will be closed on Monday & Tuesday – December 25th & 26th and Monday – January 1st.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Board of Adjustment – No meeting
Planning Board – November minutes
Public Works – November minutes
Public Safety Committee
Parks & Recreation Committee – November minutes
TDA – November minutes
ABC Board – October & November minutes
Police Report
Fire Report
Financial Report

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Member Sasse provided an update on the new webcam to be installed on Skiview Drive. The webcam will help citizens/tourists to view road conditions; TDA will fund the webcam.

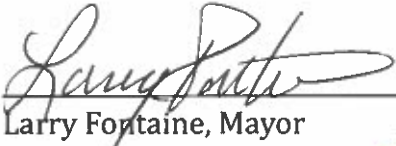
Mayor Fontaine asked for an update on the livestream of Town meetings. Town Manager Harris gave an update livestream via YouTube will begin in January 2024.

Mayor Fontaine thanked the Public Works Department for snow removal and chat on the roads during the recent weather event.

Mayor Fontaine announced tonight is the final meeting for Town Attorney Angle and thanked him for his service to the town during the past 22 years.

ADJOURN

Mayor Pro Tem Lambert made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Member Bridges seconded the motion. All members agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 6:26pm.


Larry Fontaine, Mayor


Hillary Gropp, Town Clerk

