

Town of Mars Hill
MAYOR & BOARD OF ALDERMEN
Monthly Meeting

August 3, 2009

7:00 p.m.

Town Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor John L. Chandler; Aldermen Larry Davis, Richard L. (Rick) Morgan, Robert W. (Bob) Zink

OTHERS PRESENT: Anna Freeman; Stan Colvin; Glen Locascio; Nicholas Honeycutt; Bonnie Wells; Katie Mason; Marsha Mason; Jenny Moore; Janice & Terry Meek; Tim Scoggin; Larry Thompson; David Matney; Bill Zink; Dan Lunsford; Kirsten K. Jakobsen; Steven Subera; Robert Pierce; Anne Marie Delaney; Bethany & Austin Wyatt; Darhyl Boone, Town Manager

Mayor John Chandler called the meeting to order and stated the first item of business being approval of the June, 2009, Minutes. A motion was made by Larry Davis, second from Rick Morgan, to approve the June 15, 2009, Minutes as written. The motion received unanimous approval.

Under Agenda Modification/Acceptance, Town Manager Darhyl Boone requested the Aldermen approve an Executive Session to discuss a legal issue before adjournment. Larry Davis made a motion to approve the Agenda as modified. Motion received a second from Bob Zink and was unanimously accepted.

Ms. Jenny Moore with HandMade in America expressed thanks to the NC Rural Center for their support of the work to create a market analysis for the Town of Mars Hill. Ms. Moore also expressed thanks to the NC Department of Commerce, Division of Community Assistance and the Town of Mars Hill for all their work on this project. There were 1,339 responses to the survey which is an excellent reply. The plan will be very useful in planning for the growth of Mars Hill.

Mr. Glen Locascio with the Department of Commerce, Division of Community Assistance, gave a PowerPoint presentation concerning the market analysis conducted for the Town. Mr. Locascio expressed that the response on the consumer survey was great. Mr. Locascio explained that the presentation tonight will show the following: (1) Basic Approach – Define a direction to vitalize down town; (2) Different Markets – The retail market will be discussed tonight; (3) Retail potential for Mars Hill and how we might recruit for Mars Hill; (4) Capital and finance issues involved in this plan; and (5) Business and development assistance.

The typical survey was an employed female over 50 years of age, household of two and full time resident. Carl Eller Road was the main shopping area in Mars Hill, especially Ingles. The most common form of communication about shopping is by word of mouth. The survey

indicated there is leakage of customer business going to Weaverville, Asheville and Tennessee for restaurants, clothing, coffee shop/bakery small gifts and general merchandise. Things that were noted as good in Mars Hill were attractiveness, safety and quality of goods. The things rated poor was variety of goods, parking, business hours and attractiveness of buildings. The primary trade area has a five-mile radius of Mars Hill and the average income in this five-mile area is \$22,000.00/year. The population for this area is about 11,000 people.

Mr. Locascio showed a leakage chart of customer business shopping being lost in this five-mile area that equated about 38 million dollars. Of this 38 million, a potential of 20% would be caught for the Mars Hill area. Some retail recommendations, determined from this report were to expand existing businesses, add new stores, look for potential niche markets, try to get business in the vacant buildings down town and then expand to upper floors, possible Historic District in down town.

At the end of the presentation there was discussion about the arts district proposal from the Charrette, tax credits from a Historical District designation and the number of college students who responded to the survey.

Mr. Rob Pierce, Chairman of the Economic Development Committee introduced the members of the Committee and expressed appreciation for all their hard work on the market survey and his pride in their efforts. Rob further expressed appreciation to the staff at Community Assistance and HandMade in America. The Committee drew names of the prize winners from the survey project. A list of the winners is included with the Minutes. The cost of the survey was covered by a grant from the NC Rural Center. Rob explained that the projects by the Economic Development Committee have just started. They plan to do further study on the arts district concept and a Historical Designation for the down town.

Mr. David Matney, Attorney for Blue Ridge Area Foundation, Inc., which is the operator of Blue Ridge Homes, an intermediate care facility of the mentally handicapped, located on Wall Road in Mars Hill, explained that BRAF would like to refinance the indebtedness of the Revenue Bonds issued in 1987 and refinanced in 1993 to reduce the interest rate. The Town was the sponsoring governmental entity for the issuance of the Bonds; therefore, the Town would have to approve the refinancing. To refinance, the indebtedness would have to be paid in full and property deeded to the Town. The new lender would want a deed of trust on the property; thus, BRAF is requesting the Town to deed the property to BRAF. The Town could place a restriction on the property requiring that it continue to be used for mental health/mental retardation or other similar charitable uses and, if not, title would revert to the Town. After some discussion, Mayor Chandler expressed that the Mayor & Aldermen would need to discuss this further with the Town's attorney.

Mayor Chandler appointed Tony Payne to serve on the Mars Hill Housing Authority Board of Commissioners until June 30, 2014, replacing Emmett Sams who has served on this Board for many years. The Mayor & Board requested that a letter of thanks be sent to Mr. Sams for his many years of service on the Housing Authority Board.

There was discussion concerning building height restrictions in the C-1, Down Town Business District. Larry Davis made a motion to move the September monthly meeting from Monday, September 7, 2009, to Tuesday, September 8, 2009 due to the Labor Day Holiday, and hold a Public Hearing concerning the Building Height Restriction in the down town district. The motion received a second by Rick Morgan and was unanimously approved.

The Financial Statement as of June 30, 2009, was presented and after some discussion and questions, a motion to approve was made by Bob Zink, second by Rick Morgan, and was unanimously approved.

Under Old Business, Rick Morgan questioned the status of the Public Comment Resolution. Town Attorney Larry Leake has amended the Resolution and Darhyl presented a draft copy to each member.

Under New Business, Rick Morgan explained that the Town has met with Smithson Mills who is working through the NC Rural Center to look into potential grant money that might be available to the Town. There was discussion about a Public Hearing concerning parking in the down town area. Darhyl explained that Ginny Faust with Community Assistance has agreed to help with a meeting but would like additional information and answers to some questions about different parking options.

Under Public Comment, Anne Marie Delaney asked what type questions Ginny was concerned about. Rick explained that Ginny was looking into costs of maintaining a facility, operational costs, etc.

Stan Colvin expressed appreciation for a quick response to fixing a water leak at the meter box at his house on Woodhaven Road.

With no further comment, Bob Zink made a motion to go into executive session at 8:45 p.m. The motion was seconded by Larry Davis and unanimously accepted.

Motion was made by Larry Davis that the meeting to go back into open session at 9:15 p.m. Bob Zink gave a second to the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

Motion by Larry Davis, second by Bob Zink, that the meeting adjourn. Unanimous decision.
